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ÉMILE ZOLA IN HIS ENGLISH GARDEN

(*Sept.* 1898)

Anna E. L. Brander
Camp End
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Sept 1/99.

WITH ZOLA IN ENGLAND

A STORY OF EXILE

TOLD BY

ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY

WITH FOUR PORTRAITS

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1899

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

TO

VIOLETTE AND TO VICTOR

TO DORA AND TO BOTH MARIES

DEAR WIFE AND ROMPING DAUGHTER

I LOVINGLY INSCRIBE

THIS LITTLE BOOK

He begged for Light! . . Lo, Darkness fell,
And round him cast its stifling pall!
In vain he clamoured! Ev'ry Hell
Poured forth its fumes to drown his call.

He cried for Truth! . . Lo, Falsehood came,
In robes of Impudence array'd,
Polluting Patriotism's name,
Degrading Honour to a trade.

He asked for Justice! . . Lo, between
Him and the judgment-seat there rose
The Sword of Menace, ever keen
To smite the braggart War-Wolf's foes!

Light, Truth, and Justice all denied,
He struggled on 'mid threat and blow—
A brave Voice battling by his side—
Till Error's minions struck him low.

Yet is his faith not dead, nor mine:
O'er deepest gloom, o'er worst distress,
Ever the mighty Sun doth shine
Aglow with Truth and Righteousness.

The blackest clouds are rent at last;
And the divine resistless flame
Through all, some morn, its blaze shall cast,
The Wrong disclose, the Right proclaim!

E. A. V.

February 28, 1898.

[*Printed in 'The Star' on the morrow of M. Zola's condemnation in Paris*]

PREFACE

ALL that I claim for this little book, reprinted from the columns of 'The Evening News,' is the quality of frankness. I do not desire to check or disarm criticism, but I have a right to point out that I have performed my work rapidly and have largely subordinated certain literary considerations to a desire to write my story naturally and simply, in much the same way as I should have told it in conversation with a friend. Very rarely, I think, have I departed from this rule.

The book supplies an accurate account of Émile Zola's exile in this country; but some matters I have treated briefly because he himself proposes to give the world—probably in diary form—some impressions of his sojourn in England with a record of his feelings day by day whilst

the great campaign in favour of the unfortunate Alfred Dreyfus was in progress.

First, however, M. Zola intends to collect in a volume all his published declarations, articles and letters on the Affair. Secondly, he will recount in another volume his trials at Paris and Versailles; and only in a third volume will he be able to deal with his English experiences. The last work can scarcely be ready before the end of 1900, and possibly it may not appear until the following year. And this is one of the reasons which have induced me to offer to all who are interested in the great French writer this present narrative of mine. Should the master's promised record duly appear, my own will sink into oblivion; but if, for one or a other reason, M. Zola is prevented from carrying out his plans, here, then, will at least be found some account o one of the most curious passages in his life. And then, perchance, my narrative may attain to the rank of *mémoire pour servir.*

I have said that I claim for my book the

quality of frankness. In this connection I may point out that I have made in it a full confession of certain delinquencies which were forced on me by circumstances. I trust, however, that my brother-journalists will forgive me if I occasionally led them astray with regard to M. Zola's presence in England; for I did so purely and simply in the interests of the illustrious friend who had placed himself in my hands.

That M. Zola should have applied to me directly he arrived in London will surprise none of those who are aware of the confidence he has for several years reposed in me. A newspaper referring to our connection recently called the great novelist 'my employer.' But there has never been any question of employer or employed between M. Zola and me. I should certainly never think of accepting remuneration for any little service I might be able to render him; nor would he dream of hurting my feelings by offering it. No. The simple truth is that for some years now I have translated M. Zola's novels into

English, and that I have taken my share of the proceeds of the translations. For the rest our intercourse has been purely and simply that of friends.

It is because, I believe, I know and understand Émile Zola so well, that I never once lost confidence in him throughout the events which led to his exile in England. That exile, curiously enough, I foreshadowed in a letter addressed to the 'Star' some months before it actually began. When, however, one has been intimate with the French for thirty years or so it is not, to my thinking, so very difficult to tell what is likely to happen in a given French crisis. The unexpected has to be reckoned with, of course; and much depends on ability to estimate the form which the unexpected may take. Here experience, familiarity with details of contemporary French history, and personal knowledge of the men concerned in the issue, become indispensable.

On January 16, 1898, three days after M. Zola's famous 'J'accuse' letter appeared in

'L'Aurore,' and two days before the French Government instructed the Public Prosecutor to proceed against its author, I wrote to the 'Westminster Gazette' a long letter dealing with M. Zola's position. In this letter, which appeared in the issue of the 19th, I began by establishing a comparison between Zola and Voltaire, whose action with regard to the memory of Jean Calas I briefly epitomised. Curiously enough at that moment M. Zola, as I afterwards learnt, was telling the Paris correspondent of the 'Daily Chronicle' that the opposition offered to his advocacy of the cause of Alfred Dreyfus was identical with that encountered by Voltaire in his championship of Calas. This was a curious little coincidence, for I wrote my letter without having any communication with M. Zola respecting it. It contained some passages which I here venture to quote. In a book dealing with the great novelist these passages may not be out of place, as they serve to illustrate his general attitude towards the Dreyfus case.

'Truth,' I wrote, 'has been the one passion of Émile Zola's life.[1] "May all be revealed so that all may be cured" has been his sole motto in dealing with social problems. "Light, more light!"—the last words gasped by Goethe on his death-bed—has ever been his cry. Holding the views he holds, he could not do otherwise than come forward at this crisis in French history as the champion of truth and justice. Silence on his part would have been a denial of all his principles, all his past life. . . . Against him are marshalled all the Powers of Darkness, all the energy of those who prefer concealment to light, all the enmity of the military hierarchy which has never forgotten "La Débâcle," all the hatred of the Roman hierarchy which will never forgive "Lourdes" and "Rome." And the fetish of Patriotism is brandished hither and thither, rallying even free-thinkers to the cause of concealment, while each and every appeal

[1] He himself wrote these very words seventeen months later in his article 'Justice,' published in Paris on his return from exile.

for light and truth is met by the clamorous cry: "Down with the dirty Jews!"

'For even as Jean Calas was guilty of being a Protestant so is Alfred Dreyfus guilty of being a Jew, and at the present hour unhappily there are millions of French people who can no more believe in a Jew's innocence than their forerunners could believe a Protestant to be guiltless. Zola, for his part, is no Jew, nor can he even be called a friend of the Jews—in several of his books he has attacked them somewhat violently for certain tendencies shown by some of their number—but most assuredly he does regard them as fellow-men and not as loathsome animals. In the same way Voltaire wrote pungent pages against the narrow practices of Calvinism and yet espoused the causes of Calas and Sirven, even as Zola has espoused that of Dreyfus. The only remaining question is whether Zola will prove as successful as his famous forerunner. [Nearly the whole of the European press was at that stage expressing doubt on this point.] In

this connection I may say that I regard Zola as a man of very calm, methodical, judicial mind. He is no ranter, no lover of words for words' sake, no fiery enthusiast. Each of his books is a most laborious, painstaking piece of work. If he ever brings forward a theory he bases it on a mountain of evidence, and he invariably subordinates his feelings to his reason. I therefore venture to say that if he has come forward so prominently in this Dreyfus case it is not because he *feels* that wrong has been done, but because he is absolutely *convinced* of it. Doubtless many of the expressions in his recent letter to President Faure have come from his heart, but they were in the first place dictated by his reason. It is not for me here and at the present hour to speak of proofs, however great may be public curiosity; but most certainly Zola has not taken up this case without what he considers to be abundant proof. I do not say that he will be able to prove each and every item of his great indictment, but when you wish to bring everything to light it is often

necessary to cast your net so wide that none shall escape it, none linger in concealment with their actions unexplained. And I take it that whatever be the verdict of Zola's countrymen, whether or not Alfred Dreyfus be again and this time absolutely proved guilty . . . Zola himself will have done good work in striving to bring the whole truth to light so that it shall be as evident to one and all as the very sun itself. And this, when all is said, is really Zola's one great object in this terrible business.

'I may add that he is risking far more than his great predecessor risked in favour of Calas. Voltaire pleaded from his retirement on the Swiss frontier; Zola pleads the cause he has adopted on the very spot, on the very scene of all the agitation. Anonymous assassins threaten him with death in letters and postcards. Fanatical Jew-baiters march through the streets anxious for an opportunity to wreck his house and murder not only himself but his wife also in the sacred name of Patriotism.[1]

[1] There is not the slightest doubt that M. Zola incurred the

Should their menaces be escaped there remains the Assize Court with a jury that will need to be brave indeed if it is to resist all the pressure of a deliberately organised "terror." At the end possibly lie imprisonment, fine, disgrace, ruin. How jubilantly some are already rubbing their hands in the bishops' palaces, the parsonages, the sacristies of France! Ah! no stone will be kept unturned to secure a conviction! But Émile Zola does not waver. It may be that the truth, the whole truth will only be known to the world in some distant century; but he, anxious to hasten its advent and prevent the irreparable, courageously stakes all that he has, person, position, fame, affections, and friendships. . . . And this he does for no personal object whatsoever, but in the sole cause of truth and justice, ever repeating the cry common to both Goethe and himself: "Light, more light!"

'Ah! to all the true hearts that have followed

greatest personal danger between January and April 1898. M. Ranc, the old and tried Republican, who knows what danger is, has lately pointed this out in forcible terms in the Paris journal *Le Matin*.

and loved him through years of mingled blame and praise, hard-earned victory and unmerited reviling, he is at this hour dearer even than he was before; for he has now put the seal upon his principles, and to the force of precept has added that of the most courageous personal example.'

This then is what I wrote immediately after the publication of Zola's letter 'J'accuse,' basing myself simply on my knowledge of the master's character, of the passions let loose in France, and of a few matters connected with the Dreyfus case, then kept secret but now public property. And had I to write anything of the kind at the present time, I should, I think, have but few words to alter beyond substituting the past for the present or future tense. In one respect I was mistaken. I did not imagine the truth to be quite so near at hand. Since January 1898, however, nine-tenths of it have been revealed and the rest must now soon follow. And I hold, as all hold who know the inner workings of l'Affaire Dreyfus, that M. Zola's exile, like his letter to President Faure and his repeated trials for

libel, has in a large degree contributed to this victory of the truth. For by going into voluntary banishment, he kept not only his own but also Dreyfus's case 'open,' and thus helped to foil the last desperate attempts that were being made to prevent the truth from being discovered.

I should add that in the following pages I deal very slightly with l'Affaire Dreyfus, on which so many books have already been written. Indeed, as a rule, I have only touched on those incidents which had any marked influence on M. Zola during his sojourn in this country.

E. A. V.

MERTON, SURREY.
June 1899.

Postscript.—Of the four portraits which illustrate the book, three, those of M. Zola, myself, and my daughter, are from photographs by my son Victor. The portrait of M. Zola was taken shortly after the death of Colonel Henry, at a time when the master was experiencing keen anxiety. This will, I think, be found reflected on his countenance.

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WITH ZOLA IN ENGLAND

I

ZOLA LEAVES FRANCE

FROM the latter part of the month of July 1898, down to the end of the ensuing August, a frequent heading to newspaper telegrams and paragraphs was the query, 'Where is Zola?' The wildest suppositions concerning the eminent novelist's whereabouts were indulged in and the most contradictory reports were circulated. It was on July 18 that M. Zola was tried by default at Versailles and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment on the charge of having libelled, in his letter 'J'accuse,' the military tribunal which had acquitted Commandant Esterhazy. On the evening of the 19th his disappearance was signalled by various telegrams from Paris. Most of these asserted that he had gone on a tour to Norway, a course which the

'Daily News' correspondent declared to be very sensible on M. Zola's part, given the tropical heat which then prevailed in the French metropolis.

On the 20th, however, the telegrams gave out that Zola had left Paris on the previous evening by the 8.35 express for Lucerne, being accompanied by his wife and her maid. Later, the same day, appeared a graphic account of how he had dined at a Paris restaurant and thence despatched a waiter to the Eastern Railway Station to procure tickets for himself and a friend. The very numbers of these tickets were given!

Yet a further telegram asserted that he had been recognised by a fellow-passenger, had left the train before reaching the Swiss frontier, and had gaily continued his journey on a bicycle. But another newspaper correspondent treated this account as pure invention, and pledged his word that M. Zola had gone to Holland by way of Brussels.

On July 21 his destination was again alleged to be Norway; but—so desperate were the efforts made to reconcile all the conflicting rumours—his route was said to lie through Switzerland, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands. His wife (so the papers

reported) was with him, and they were bicycling up hill and down dale through the aforenamed countries. Two days later it was declared that he had actually been recognised at a café in Brussels whence he had fled in consequence of the threats of the customers, who were enraged 'by the presence of such a traitor.' Then he repaired to Antwerp, where he was also recognised, and where he promptly embarked on board a steamer bound for Christiania.

However, on July 25, the 'Petit Journal' authoritatively asserted that all the reports hitherto published were erroneous. M. Zola, said the Paris print, was simply hiding in the suburbs of Paris, hoping to reach Le Havre by night and thence sail for Southampton. But fortunately the Prefecture of Police was acquainted with his plans, and at the first movement he might make he would be arrested.

That same morning our own 'Daily Chronicle' announced M. Zola's presence at a London hotel, and on the following day the 'Morning Leader' was in a position to state that the hotel in question was the Grosvenor. Both 'Chronicle' and 'Leader' were right; but as I had received pressing instruc-

tions to contradict all rumours of M. Zola's arrival in London, I did so in this instance through the medium of the Press Association. I here frankly acknowledge that I thus deceived both the Press and the public. I acted in this way, however, for weighty reasons, which will hereafter appear.

At this point I would simply say that M. Zola's interests were, in my estimation, of far more consequence than the claims of public curiosity, however well meant and even flattering its nature.

One effect of the Press Association's contradiction was to revive the Norway and Switzerland stories. Several papers, while adhering to the statement that M. Zola had been in London, added that he had since left England with his wife, and that Hamburg was their immediate destination. And thus the game went merrily on. M. Zola's arrival at Hamburg was duly reported. Then he sailed on the 'Capella' for Bergen, where his advent was chronicled by Reuter. Next he was setting out for Trondhjem, whence in a few days he would join his friend Björnstjerne Björnson, the novelist, at the latter's estate of Aulestad in the Gudbrandsdalen. Björnson, as it happened, was then at Munich, in Germany, but this circumstance did

not weigh for a moment with the newspapers. The Norway story was so generally accepted that a report was spread to the effect that M. Zola had solicited an audience of the Emperor William, who was in Norway about that time, and that the Kaiser had peremptorily refused to see him, so great was the Imperial desire to do nothing of a nature to give umbrage to France.

As I have already mentioned, the only true reports (so far as London was concerned) were those of two English newspapers, but even they were inaccurate in several matters of detail. For instance, the lady currently spoken of as Mme. Zola was my own wife, who, it so happens, is a Frenchwoman. At a later stage the 'Daily Mail' hit the nail on the head by signalling M. Zola's presence at the Oatlands Park Hotel; but so many reports having already proved erroneous, the 'Mail' was by no means certain of the accuracy of its information, and the dubitative form in which its statement was couched prevented the matter from going further.

At last a period of comparative quiet set in, and though gentlemen of the Press were still anxious to extract information from me, nothing

further appeared in print as to M. Zola's whereabouts until the 'Times' Paris correspondent, M. de Blowitz, contributed to his paper, early in the present year, a most detailed and amusing account of M. Zola's flight from France and his subsequent movements in exile. In this narrative one found Mme. Zola equipping her husband with a night-gown for his perilous journey abroad, and secreting bank notes in the lining of his garments. Then, carrying a slip of paper in his hand, the novelist had been passed on through London from policeman to policeman, until he took train to a village in Warwickshire, where the little daughter of an innkeeper had recognised him from seeing his portrait in one of the illustrated newspapers.

There was something also about his acquaintance with the vicar of the locality and a variety of other particulars, all of which helped to make up as pretty a romance as the 'Times' readers had been favoured with for many a day. But excellent as was M. de Blowitz's narrative from the romantic standpoint his information was sadly inaccurate. Of his *bona fides* there can be no doubt, but some of M. Zola's friends are rather partial to a little harmless joking, and it is evident that a trap

was laid for the shrewd correspondent of the 'Times,' and that he, in an unguarded moment, fell into it.

On the incidents which immediately preceded M. Zola's departure from France I shall here be brief; these incidents are only known to me by statements I have had from M. and Mme. Zola themselves. But the rest is well within my personal knowledge, as one of the first things which M. Zola did on arriving in England was to communicate with me and in certain respects place himself in my hands.

This, then, is a plain unvarnished narrative—firstly, of the steps that I took in the matter, in conjunction with a friend, who is by profession a solicitor; and, secondly, of the principal incidents which marked M. Zola's sojourn in England. With the chronicle of incidents I have blended an account of M. Zola's views on some matters of interest, as imparted by him to me at various times. But, ultimately, M. Zola will himself pen his own private impressions, and on these I shall not trespass. It is because, according to his own statements to me, his book on his English impressions (should he write it) could not possibly appear

for another twelve months, that I have put these notes together.

The real circumstances, then, of M. Zola's departure from France are these: On July 18, the day fixed for his second trial at Versailles, he left Paris in a livery-stable brougham hired for the occasion at a cost of fifty francs. His companion was his *fidus Achates*, M. Fernand Desmoulin, the painter, who had already acted as his bodyguard at the time of the great trial in Paris. Versailles was reached in due course, and the judicial proceedings began under circumstances which have been chronicled too often to need mention here. When M. Zola had retired from the court, allowing judgment to go against him by default, he was joined by Maître Labori, his counsel, and the pair of them returned to Paris in the vehicle which had brought M. Zola from the city in the morning. M. Desmoulin found a seat in another carriage.

The brougham conveying Messrs. Zola and Labori was driven to the residence of M. Georges Charpentier, the eminent publisher, in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and there they were presently joined by M. Georges Clemenceau, Mme. Zola, and a few others. It was then that the necessity of

leaving France was pressed upon M. Zola, who, though he found the proposal little to his liking, eventually signified his acquiescence.

The points urged in favour of his departure abroad were as follows: He must do his utmost to avoid personal service of the judgment given against him by default, as the Government was anxious to cast him into prison and thus stifle his voice. If such service were effected the law would only allow him a few days in which to apply for a new trial, and as he could not make default a second time, and could not hope at that stage for fresh and decisive evidence in his favour, or for a change of tactics on the part of the judges, this would mean the absolute and irrevocable loss of his case.

On the other hand, by avoiding personal service of the judgment he would retain the right to claim a new trial at any moment he might find convenient; and thus not only could he prevent his own case from being closed against him and becoming a *chose jugée*, but he would contribute powerfully towards keeping the whole Dreyfus affair open, pending revelations which even then were foreseen. And, naturally, England, which so

freely gives asylum to all political offenders, was chosen as his proper place of exile.

The amusing story of the nightgown tucked under his arm and the bank notes sewn up in his coat is, of course, pure invention. A few toilet articles were pressed upon him, and his wife emptied her purse into his own. That was all. Then he set out for the Northern Railway Station, where he caught the express leaving for Calais at 9 P.M. Fortunately enough he secured a first-class compartment which had no other occupant.

M. Clemenceau had previously suggested to him that on his arrival in London he might well put up at the Grosvenor Hotel, and it is quite possible that the same gentleman handed him—as stated in the 'Times' narrative—a slip of paper bearing the name of that noted hostelry. But, at all events, this paper was never used by M. Zola. He has an excellent memory, and when he reached Victoria Station at forty minutes past five o'clock on the morning of July 19, the name of the hotel where he had arranged to fix his quarters for a few days came readily enough to his lips.

There was, however, one thing that he did not

know, and that was the close proximity of this hotel to the railway station. So, having secured a hansom, he briefly told the Jehu to drive him to the Grosvenor. At this, cabby looked down from his perch in sheer astonishment. Then, doubtless, in a considerate and honest spirit—for there are still some considerate and honest cabbies in London—he tried to explain matters. At all events he spoke at length. But M. Zola failed to understand him.

'Grosvenor Hotel,' repeated the novelist; and then, seeing that cabby seemed bent on further expostulation, he resolutely took his seat in the vehicle. This driver, doubtless after the fashion of certain of his Paris colleagues, must be trying to play some trick in order to avoid a long journey. It was as well, therefore, to teach him to refrain from trifling with his 'fares.'

However, cabby said no more, or if he did his words failed to reach M. Zola. The reins were jerked, the scraggy night-horse broke into a spasmodic trot, turned out of the station, and pulled up in front of the caravansary which an eminent butcher has done so much to immortalise.

Zola was astonished at reaching his destination

with such despatch, and suddenly became conscious of cabby's real motive in expostulating with him. However, he ascended the steps, entered the hotel, produced one of the few hundred-franc notes which his purse contained, and asked first for change and afterwards for a bedroom. English money was handed to him for his note, and the night porter carried cabby the regulation shilling for the journey of a few yards which had been made.

Then, as M. Zola had no luggage with him, he was requested to deposit a sovereign with the hotel clerk and to inscribe his name in the register. This he did, and the tell-tale signature of 'M. Pascal, Paris,' still remains as a token of the accuracy of this narrative.

Such, then, was the way in which M. Zola travelled across London, obligingly passed on from policeman to policeman, and carrying a slip of paper—a 'way-bill,' as it were—in his hand! As the above account was given to me by himself, it will probably be deemed more worthy of credit than the amusing romance which was so successfully palmed off on M. de Blowitz of the 'Times.'

Of his journey from Paris that night, he reclining alone in his compartment as the Calais express rushed across the plains of Picardy under a star-lit sky; of his embarking on board the little Channel boat amidst the glimmer of lanterns, his transference to a fresh train at Dover, followed by another and even faster rush on to London; of his gloomy thoughts at this sudden severance from one and all, at speeding in this lonely fashion into exile, and returning surreptitiously, as it were, to the city where but a few years previously he had been received as one of the kings of literature, he will ever retain a keen impression.

It was at Victoria that his journey ended, even as it had ended in 1893; but how changed the scene! He finds the station gaunt and well-nigh deserted; the few passengers are gliding away like phantoms into the morning air; the porters loiter around, and the Customs officers discharge their duties in a perfunctory, sleepy way. No crowd of Pressmen and sightseers is present; there are no delegates and address, and flowers, and cheers as of yore. Only cabby, who expostulates, and who doubtless thinks this Frenchman a bit of a crank

to insist upon being driven just round the corner!

And at the hotel no army of servants appears to marshal the master to the best suite of rooms on the principal floor. In lieu thereof comes a doubtful greeting and a demand for a deposit of money, for fear lest he should be some vulgar bilker. Then, once he is in the lift, he goes up and up without stopping, until the very topmost floor is reached. And afterwards he is marched along interminable passages, with walls painted a crude, hideous shade of blue, so offensive to all artistic instinct as verily to make one's gorge rise. Then at last he finds himself in a room which, high as it is situated, is of lowly, common aspect. Yet he is only too glad to reach it, and throw himself on the bed to rest awhile, and to think.

New experiences are awaiting him. He is far away from the mob that pelted his windows with stones and yelled 'Conspuez! conspuez!' whenever he left his house. Here there is no hostility. Here quietude prevails, save for the shrill whistles of arriving or departing trains. Yet he is also far from the great majority of his affections and friendships. But at this remembrance a fresh

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thought comes to him ; he takes one of his visiting cards from his pocket-book, pencils a few lines on it, and encloses it in an envelope ready to be posted. Then he again lies down ; tired as he is, after his exciting day at Versailles and his wearisome night journey, he soon falls soundly asleep.

II

IN LONDON

ON Tuesday, July 19, I went to London on business, and did not return to my home in the south-western suburbs until nearly seven o'clock in the evening. My wife immediately placed in my hands an envelope addressed to me in the handwriting of M. Zola. At first, having noticed neither the stamp nor the postmark, I imagined that the communication had come from Paris.

On opening the envelope, however, I found that it contained a card on which was written in French and in pencil :—

'My dear confrère,—Tell nobody in the world, and particularly no newspaper, that I am in London. And oblige me by coming to see me to-morrow, Wednesday, at eleven o'clock, at Grosvenor Hotel. You will ask for M. Pascal. And

ERNEST A. VIZETELLY

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above all, absolute silence, for the most serious interests are at stake.

'Cordially,

'EMILE ZOLA.'

I was for a moment amazed and also somewhat affected by this message, the first addressed by M. Zola to anybody after his departure from France. Since the publication of his novel 'Paris,' which had followed his first trial, I had not seen him, and we had exchanged but few letters. I had written to express my sympathy over the outcome of the proceedings at Versailles, but owing to his sudden flitting my note had failed to reach him. And now here he was in London—in exile, as, curiously enough, I myself had foretold as probable some time before in a letter to one of the newspapers.

My first impulse was to hurry to the Grosvenor immediately, but I reflected that I might not find him there, and that even if I did I might inconvenience him, as he had appointed the following day for my call. So I contented myself with telegraphing as follows: 'Pascal, Grosvenor Hotel. —Rely on me, to-morrow, eleven o'clock.' And, as a precautionary measure, I signed my telegram merely with my Christian name.

As I afterwards learnt, M. Zola had spent that day companionless, walking about the Mall and St. James's Park, and purchasing a shirt, a collar, and a pair of socks at a shop in or near Buckingham Palace Road, where, knowing no English, he explained his requirements by pantomime. He had further studied several street scenes, and had given some time to wondering what purpose might be served by a certain ugly elongated building, overlooking a drive and a park. There was a sentry at the gate, but the place had such a gaunt, clumsy, and mournful aspect, that M. Zola could not possibly picture it as the London palace of her most Gracious Majesty the Queen.

However, evening found him once more in his room at the Grosvenor; and feeling tired and feverish he lay down and dozed. When he awoke between nine and ten o'clock he perceived a buff envelope on the carpet near by him. It had been thrust under the door during his sleep, and its presence greatly astonished him, for he expected neither letter nor telegram. For a moment, as he has told me, he imagined this to be some trap; wondered if he had been watched and followed to London, and almost made up his mind to leave the

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hotel that night. But when, after a little hesitation, he had opened the envelope and read my telegram, he realised how groundless had been his alarm.

On the morrow, when I reached the Grosvenor and inquired at the office there for M. Pascal, I was asked my name, on giving which I received a note from M. Zola saying that he unexpectedly found himself obliged to go out, but would return at 2.30 P.M. As I stood reading this note, I espied a couple of individuals scrutinising me in what I deemed a most suspicious manner. Both were Frenchmen evidently; they wore billycock hats and carried stout sticks; and one of them, swarthy and almost brigandish of aspect, had the ribbon of the Legion of Honour in his buttonhole. It was easy to take these individuals for French detectives, and I hastily jumped to the conclusion that they were on 'M. Pascal's' track.

To make matters even more suspicious, when, after placing Zola's note in my pocket, I began to cross the vestibule, the others deliberately followed me, and in all likelihood I should have fled never to return if a well-known figure in a white billycock and grey suit had not suddenly advanced towards us from the direction of the staircase. In another

moment I had exchanged greetings with M. Zola, and my suspicious scrutinisers had been introduced to me as friends. One of them was none other than M. Fernand Desmoulin. They had arrived from Paris that morning, and were about to sally forth with M. Zola in search of Mr. Fletcher Moulton, Q.C., to whom they had brought a letter of introduction from Maître Labori.

Hence the note which M. Zola had already deposited for me at the hotel office. Had I been a moment later I should have found them gone.

My arrival led to a change in the programme. It was resolved to begin matters with lunch at the hotel itself, and to postpone the quest for Mr. Fletcher Moulton until the afternoon. I made, at the time, a note of our menu. The 'bitter bread of exile' consisted on this occasion of an omelet, fried soles, fillet of beef, and potatoes. To wash down this anchoretic fare M. Desmoulin and myself ordered Sauterne and Apollinaris ; but the contents of the water bottle sufficed for M. Zola and the other gentleman.

With waiters moving to and fro, nearly always within hearing, there was little conversation at table, but we afterwards chatted in all freedom in

M. Zola's room just under the roof. Ah! that room. I have already referred to the dingy aspect which it presented. Around the Grosvenor Hotel, encompassing its roof, runs a huge ornamental cornice, behind which are the windows of rooms assigned, I suppose, to luggageless visitors. From the rooms themselves there is nothing to be seen unless you throw back your head, when a tiny patch of sky above the top line of the cornice becomes visible. You are, as it were, in a gloomy well. The back of the cornice, with its plaster stained and cracked, confronts your eyes; and with a little imagination you can easily fancy yourself in a dungeon looking into some castle moat.

'*Le fossé de Vincennes*,' so M. Zola suggested, and that summed up everything. Yet it seemed to him very appropriate to his circumstances, and he absolutely refused to exchange rooms with M. Desmoulin, who was somewhat more comfortably lodged.

The appointments of M. Zola's chamber were, I remember, of a summary description. There were few chairs, and so one of us sat on the bed. We succeeded in procuring some black coffee,

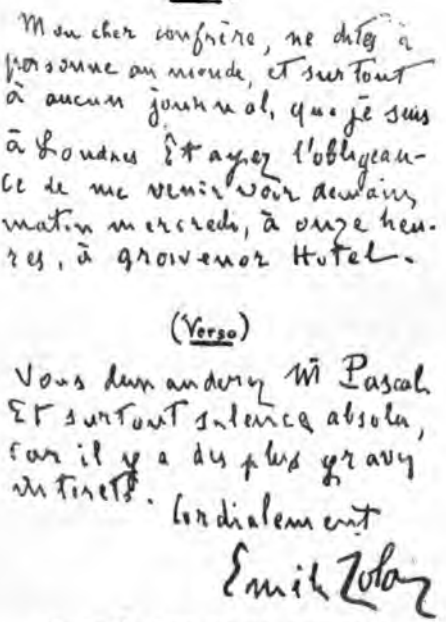
though the chambermaid regarded this as a most unusual 'bedroom order' at that hour of the day; and when M. Desmoulin had lighted a cigar, his friend a pipe, and myself a cigarette, a regular Council of War was held. [N.B.—M. Zola gave up tobacco in his young days, when it was a question of his spending twopence per diem on himself, or of allowing his mother the wherewithal to buy an extra pound of bread.]

The council dealt mainly with two points—first, what was M. Zola to do in England? Should he go into the country, or to the seaside, or settle down in the London suburbs? Since he wished to avoid recognition, it would be foolish for him to remain in London, particularly at an hotel like the Grosvenor. Then, for my benefit, the legal position was set forth, as well as the object of taking Maître Labori's letter to Mr. Fletcher Moulton.

The chief point was, Could the French Government in any way signify the judgment of the Versailles Court to M. Zola personally while he remained in Great Britain? If the French officials could legally do nothing of that kind, there would be less necessity for M. Zola to court retirement.

IN LONDON

After the hurly-burly of *l'affaire Dreyfus*, he certainly needed some rest and privacy, but the question was whether retirement would be a


(Recto)

Mon cher confrère, ne dites à personne au monde, et surtout à aucun journaliste, que je suis à Londres. Etayez l'obligeance de me venir voir demain matin mercredi, à onze heures, à Grosvenor Hotel.

(Verso)

Vous demanderez M. Pascal. Et surtout silence absolu, car il y a des plus graves intérêts.

Cordialement

Emile Zola

M. ZOLA'S NOTE TO MR. VIZETELLY.

necessity or a mere matter of convenience. Now the choice of a place of sojourn depended on the answer to the second question, and it was resolved, *nem. con.*, that M. Desmoulin, who spoke a little

English and knew something of London, should forthwith drive to Mr. Fletcher Moulton's house in Onslow Square, S.W., in accordance with the address given on Maître Labori's letter. M. Desmoulin's friend, on his side, was to return to Paris that afternoon by the Club train. So, the council over, both these gentlemen went off, leaving M. Zola and myself together.

We had a long and desultory chat, now on the Dreyfus affair generally, now on M. Zola's personal position, the probable duration of his exile, and so forth. He himself did not think that he would remain abroad beyond October at the latest, and as there might be a delay if not a difficulty in getting any clothes sent to him from Paris, he proposed to make a few purchases.

It was then that he told me how he had already bought a shirt, collar, and socks on the previous day.

'I had nothing but what I was wearing,' said he. 'I had been to Versailles and had sat perspiring in the crowded court; then I had spent the night travelling. I looked dirty, and I felt abominably uncomfortable. So I go out, yesterday morning, and see a shop with shirts, neckties,

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collars, and socks in the window. I go in ; I take hold of my collar, I pull down my cuffs, I tap my shirt front. The shopman smiles ; he understands me. He measures my neck ; he gives me a shirt and some collars. But then we come to the socks, and I pull up my trousers and point to those I am wearing. He understands immediately. He is very intelligent. He climbs his steps and pulls parcels and boxes from his shelves.

'Here are socks of all colours, dark and light, spotted, striped, in mixtures, in cotton, in wool, some ribbed and some with silk clockings. But they are huge ! I look at one pair ; it is too big ; he shows me another and another ; they are still of a larger size. Then, impatient, and perhaps rather abruptly, I hold out my fist for the man to measure it, and thus gauge the length of my foot as is done in Paris. But he does not understand me. He draws back close to his shelves as if he imagines that I want to box him. And when I again lift my foot to call his attention to its size, he shows even greater concern. Fortunately an idea comes to me. I take one of the mammoth socks that are lying on the counter and fold parts of it neatly back, so as to make it appear very much smaller

than it is. Then the shopman suddenly brightens, taps his forehead, climbs his steps again, and pulls yet more boxes and parcels from his shelves. And here at last are the small socks! So I choose a pair, and pay the bill. And the man bows his thanks, well pleased, it seems, to find that in thrusting out my fist and raising my foot I had been actuated by no desire to injure him.'

I was still chuckling over M. Zola's anecdote when M. Desmoulin returned from his journey to Onslow Square. He had there interviewed a smart boy in buttons, who had informed him that his learned master was out of town electioneering, and might not be home again for a week or two. Desmoulin had, therefore, retained possession of Maître Labori's note of introduction.

I now remembered what I ought to have recalled before—namely, that Mr. Fletcher Moulton was at that moment a candidate for the parliamentary representation of the Launceston division of Cornwall. Under such circumstances it was unlikely that his advice would be available for some little time to come. And so all idea of applying to him was abandoned. It may be that this narrative, should it meet the learned gentleman's

eye, will for the first time acquaint him with what was intended by M. Zola, acting under Maître Labori's advice.

M. Zola, I should add, remained most anxious to secure an English legal opinion on his position, and I therefore suggested to him that I should that evening consult a discreet and reliable friend of mine, a solicitor. We, of course, well knew that there could be no extradition, but it was a point whether a copy of the Versailles judgment might not legally be placed in M. Zola's hands, under such conventions as might exist between France and Great Britain.

This, I thought, could be ascertained within the next forty-eight hours, and meantime M. Zola might remain where he was, for I could not well offer him an asylum in my little home. My connection with him as his English translator being so widely known, newspaper reporters were certain to call upon me, and whatever precautions I might take, his presence in my house would speedily be discovered. On the other hand, M. Desmoulin wished to go to Brighton or Hastings, but, in my estimation, both those places, crowded with holiday-makers, were not desirable spots.

Leaving the Grosvenor, the three of us discussed these matters while strolling up Buckingham Palace Road. It was a warm sunshiny afternoon, and the street was full of people. All at once a couple of ladies passed us, and one of them, after turning her head in our direction, made a remark to her companion.

'Did you hear that?' Desmoulin eagerly inquired. 'She spoke in French!'

'Ah!' I replied. 'What did she say?'

'"Why," she exclaimed, "there's M. Zola!" Our secret is as good as gone now! It will be all over London by to-morrow!'

We felt somewhat alarmed. Who could those ladies be? For my part I had scarcely noticed them. Desmoulin opined, however, that they might perchance be French actresses, members possibly of Madame Sarah Bernhardt's company, which was then in London. And again he urged the necessity of immediate departure. They must go to Hastings, Brighton, Ramsgate—some place at all events where the author of 'J'accuse' would incur less chance of recognition.

To me it seemed that some quiet, retired country village would be most suitable. In any

town M. Zola would incur great risk of being identified. Moreover his appearance was conspicuous, his white billycock, his glasses, his light grey suit, his rosette of the Legion of Honour, his many characteristic gestures all attracted attention. If anything was to be done he must begin by Anglicising his appearance. But whatever I might urge I found him stubborn on that point; and, as for departure from London, he preferred to postpone this until I should have seen my friend the solicitor.

'Everything is as good as lost!' cried M. Desmoulin. 'How foolish, too, of Clemenceau to have sent you to a swell hotel in a fashionable neighbourhood! I am certain there are other French people staying at the Grosvenor—I heard somebody talking French there this morning.'

This again might lead to unpleasantness, and I could see that the master was gradually growing anxious. By this time, however, we had reached St. James's Park, and there, as we seated ourselves on some chairs beside the ornamental water, I led the conversation into another channel by producing an evening newspaper, and reading therefrom successive narratives of how M. Zola had sailed for

Norway, how he had taken train at the Eastern Terminus in Paris, and how he had been bicycling through the Oberland on his way to some mysterious Helvetian retreat. Then we laughed—ah! those journalists!—and fears were at an end.

The ducks paddled past us, the drooping foliage of the island trees stirred in the warm breeze. On a bench near at hand a couple of vagrants sat dozing, with their toes protruding through their wretched footgear. Then a soldier, smart and pert, strolled up, a flower between his lips and a good-looking girl beside him. Away in front of us were the top windows and the roofs of St. Anne's Mansions. Farther, on the left, the clock tower of Westminster glinted in the sun-rays.

'Fine ducks!' said M. Zola.

'A pretty corner,' added Desmoulin, waving his hand towards some branches that drooped to the water's edge. And suddenly I remembered and told them of another French exile, the epicurean St. Évremond, whose needs were relieved by Charles II. appointing him governor of yonder Duck Island at a salary of 300*l.* a year.

'Well, I have little money in my pocket,' quoth Zola, 'but I don't think I shall come to that. I

hope that my pen alone will always yield me the little I require.'

But Big Ben struck the hour. It was six o'clock. So we separated, Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin to retire to the dungeon at the Grosvenor, and I to go in search of my friend the solicitor at his private house at Wimbledon.

III

DANGER SIGNALS

THAT evening, then, I called upon my friend—Mr. F. W. Wareham, of Wimbledon, and Ethelburga House, Bishopsgate Street—and laid before him the legal points. I afterwards arranged to see him on the following morning in town, when I hoped to fix a meeting between him and M. Zola. My first call on Thursday, July 21, was made to the Grosvenor Hotel, where I found both the master and M. Desmoulin in a state of anxiety. M. Zola, for his part, felt altogether out of his element. After the excitement of his trial and his journey to England, and the novelty of finding himself stranded in a strange city, a kind of reaction had set in and he was extremely depressed.

M. Desmoulin on his side, having procured several morning newspapers, had explored their columns to ascertain whether the ladies by whom

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the master had been recognised in the street on the previous day, had by any chance noised the circumstance abroad. However, the Press was still on the Norway and Holland scents, and as yet not a paper so much as suggested M. Zola's presence in England.

'There has hardly been time,' said Desmoulin to me, 'but there will probably be something fresh this afternoon. Those actresses are certain to tell people, and we shall have to make ourselves scarce.'

I tried to cheer and tranquillise both him and M. Zola, and then arranged that Wareham should come to the hotel at 2 P.M. Meantime, said I, whatever M. Desmoulin might do, it would be as well for M. Zola to remain indoors. Several commissions were entrusted to me, and I went off, promising to return about noon.

I betook myself first to Messrs. Chatto and Windus's in St. Martin's Lane, where I arrived a few minutes before ten o'clock. Neither Mr. Chatto nor his partner, Mr. Percy Spalding, had as yet arrived, and I therefore had to wait a few minutes. When Mr. Spalding made his appearance he greeted me with a smile, and while leading the

way to his private room exclaimed, 'So our friend Zola is in London!'

To describe my amazement is beyond my powers. I could only just gasp, 'How do you know that?'

'Why, my wife saw him yesterday in Buckingham Palace Road.'

I was confounded. For my part I had scarcely glanced at the ladies whom Desmoulin had conjectured to be French actresses—simply because they were young, prepossessing, and spoke French!—and certainly I should not readily have recognised Mrs. Spalding, whom I had only met once some years previously. It now seemed to me rather fortunate that she should be the person who had recognised M. Zola, since she would naturally be discreet as soon as the situation should be made clear to her.

After I had explained the position, I ascertained that the only persons besides herself who knew anything so far were her husband and the lady friend who had accompanied her on the previous day.

'I will telegraph to my wife at once,' said Mr. Spalding, 'and you may be sure that the

matter will go no further. We certainly had a hearty laugh at breakfast this morning when we read in the "Telegraph" of Zola bicycling over the Swiss frontier; but, of course, as from what you tell me, the matter is serious, neither my wife nor myself will speak of it.'

'And her friend?' I exclaimed, 'she knows nothing of the necessity for secrecy, and may perhaps gossip about it.'

'She is going to Hastings to-day.'

'Hastings!' said I, 'why M. Desmoulin, Zola's companion, does nothing but talk of going to Hastings! I am glad I know this. Hastings is barred for good, so far as Zola is concerned.'

'Well, I will arrange for my wife to see her friend this morning before she starts,' Mr. Spalding rejoined, 'and in this way we may be sure that her friend will say nothing.'

This excellent suggestion was acted upon immediately. Mr. Spalding telegraphed full instructions to his wife, and later in the day I learnt that everything had been satisfactorily arranged. But for this timely action, following upon my lucky call at Messrs. Chatto and Windus's establishment, it is virtually certain that the meeting in the

Buckingham Palace Road would have been talked about and the game of 'Where is Zola?' brought to an abrupt conclusion. As it happened, both ladies, being duly warned, preserved absolute secrecy.

After going to Bishopsgate Street to see Wareham, and executing several minor commissions, I returned to the Grosvenor, where Zola and Desmoulin were much amused when I told them of the outcome of the previous day's fright.

'It was a remarkable coincidence certainly,' said M. Zola. 'At a low calculation I daresay a thousand women passed me in the streets yesterday; just one of them recognised me, and she, you say, was Mrs. Spalding. Shortsighted as I am, not having seen her, too, since I was in England, a few years ago, I had no notion she was the person who turned as she passed along, and said, "There's Monsieur Zola."

'But the curious part of it is that you should have had to go to Chatto's, and should have learnt the lady's name so promptly from her husband! Mathematically there were untold chances that this lady who recognised me might be some stranger's wife, and that we might never more

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hear anything of her! Yet you discover her identity at once. This is the kind of thing which occasionally occurs in novels, but which critics say never happens in real life. Well, now we know the contrary.'

And he added gaily, 'You see it is another instance of my good luck, which still attends me in spite of all the striving of those who bear me grudges.'

So far as the ladies were concerned things were, indeed, very satisfactory. But the same could hardly be said of the position at the Grosvenor. Neither M. Zola nor M. Desmoulin could leave the hotel or return to it without being scrutinised. They had also noticed many a glance in their direction at meal-time in the dining-room; and they had come to the conclusion that departure was imperative. I did not gainsay them, for I shared their views, and, in fact, I had already discussed the matter with Wareham. I explained, however, that one must have a few hours to devise suitable plans.

Seaside places were dangerous at that time of the year, and the best course would probably be to take a furnished house in the country. Meantime,

said I, Wareham had kindly offered to accommodate M. Zola at his residence at Wimbledon, while M. Desmoulin might sleep close by at the house of Mr. Everson (Wareham's managing clerk), who also disposed of a spare bedroom. Further discussion of these matters was postponed, however, until Wareham's arrival at the Grosvenor in the afternoon.

As Zola and Desmoulin both distrusted the inquisitive glances of the visitors and the attendants at the hotel, we lunched, I remember, at a restaurant in or near Victoria Street—a deep, narrow place, crowded with little tables. And here again M. Zola, in his light garments, with the rosette of the Legion of Honour showing brightly in his buttonhole, became the observed of all observers.

He was, indeed, so conspicuous, so characteristic a figure that, looking backward and remembering how repeatedly the illustrated papers had portrayed him and how many photographs of him were to be seen in shop windows, I often wonder how it happened that he was not recognised a hundred times during those few days spent in London. It may be that many did recognise him, but held

their tongues. As yet, certainly, there was not a word in the newspapers to set his adversaries upon his track.

It was in a corner of the smoking-room at the Grosvenor, a hot gloomy apartment overlooking Victoria Station, that I introduced Wareham to the novelist. The former had already formed some opinion, but a few points remained for consideration. The chief of these, as Wareham explained, was how far the French Republic might claim jurisdiction over Frenchmen.

In matters of process some countries asserted a measure of authority over their subjects wherever they might be; and the question was, what might be the law of France in that respect? Of course M. Zola could not be extradited. The offence for which he had been sentenced did not come within the purview of the Extradition Act. Again (in reply to a query from M. Zola), there was no diplomatic channel through which a French criminal libel judgment could be signified in England. But suppose that French detectives should discover M. Zola's whereabouts, and suppose a French process-server should quietly come to England with a couple of witnesses, and by some craft or

good luck should succeed in placing a copy of the Versailles judgment in M. Zola's hands?

Unless a breach of the Queen's peace were committed, it might be difficult for the English authorities to interfere. There appeared to be no case or precedent in England applying to such a matter. In Germany a foreign process-server would be liable to penal servitude. But, of course, that was not to the point. Again, although the service by a foreigner might not hold good in English law, that had nothing to do with it. The process-server and his witnesses would immediately return to France; they would there prove to the satisfaction of their employers that they had served the judgment on M. Zola personally, and they would be able to snap their fingers at English lawyers should the latter complain that the thrusting of a document into a man's hand under such circumstances was a technical assault. They would have gained their point. Judgment would have been served, and in accordance with French law M. Zola would be called upon to enter an appearance against it at Versailles.

'Things must largely depend,' concluded Wareham, 'on whether French law allows process to be

served on a subject out of the jurisdiction. And that is a point rather for French legal advisers than for me. Still I shall look into the matter further; and if at the same time Mâitre Labori can be communicated with and can supply his opinion on the question, so much the better. I now raise the point because it seems the crux of the whole matter, and if it goes against us it is certain that M. Zola ought to remain in close retirement. For the present it is as well that he should run as little risk as possible.'

M. Zola acquiesced in the suggestion of writing to his French counsel on the point which had been raised; and the conversation then went on in the same low tone that had been preserved from the outset.

On entering the smoking-room we had found it deserted, but whilst Wareham was speaking a couple of gentlemen had come in. One, I remember, was an elderly, florid man, with mutton-chop whiskers and a buff waistcoat, who took his stand beside the fireplace at the further end of the room and puffed away at a big cigar. He looked inoffensive enough, and paid no attention to us. But the other, a middle-aged

individual, tall and slim, with military moustaches, eyed us very keenly, changed his position two or three times, and finally installed himself in a chair, whence, while trifling with a cigarette, he commanded a good view of M. Zola's face. Desmoulin, I think, was the first to notice this, and to call the novelist's attention to it. Zola then shifted his position, and the military looking gentleman soon did the same. At last, doubtless having satisfied his curiosity, he left the room, not, however, without a sharp, comprehensive survey of our party as he passed us on his way out.

I do not now exactly remember how it happened that Wareham was not received in the 'dungeon,' instead of the smoking-room. The choice of the latter apartment was unfortunate. I have no doubt that, if some of the newspapers were, a day or two afterwards, able to state that M. Zola was staying at the Grosvenor Hotel, it was through certain remarks made by the inquisitive military looking gentleman to whom I have referred.

On the other hand his curiosity exercised decisive influence over M. Zola's subsequent movements. He had hitherto been rather chary of

accepting Wareham's hospitality, for fear lest he should inconvenience him. But the offer now being renewed was promptly accepted, and it was agreed that I should take both Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin to Wimbledon that evening.

As it was expected that several letters from Paris would arrive at the hotel, addressed to M. Pascal, I arranged to call or send for them. The same course was adopted with regard to a few articles which M. Zola had given to be washed and which had not yet been returned to him. Some of these things were significantly marked with the letter 'Z,' and for this reason it was desirable that they should be recovered. Here I may mention that during the next few days my wife repeatedly called at the Grosvenor for M. Pascal's correspondence, a circumstance which doubtless gave rise to the rumour that Mme. Zola had joined her husband in London.

The exodus from the hotel was not particularly imposing. M. Desmoulin had originally intended to stay but one day in London, and thus merely had a dressing-case with him. As for M. Zola, his few belongings (inclusive of a small bottle of ink, which he would not part with) were stuffed

into his pockets, or went towards the making of a peculiarly shaped newspaper parcel, tied round with odd bits of string. Dressing-case and parcel were duly brought down into the grand vestibule, where the hotel servants smiled on them benignly. There was, indeed, some little humour in the situation.

The novelist, with his gold pince-nez and gold watch-chain, his red rosette, and a large and remarkably fine diamond sparkling on one of his little fingers, looked so eminently respectable that it was difficult to associate him with the wretched misshapen newspaper parcel—his only luggage !—which he eyed so jealously. However, as the attendants were all liberally fee'd, they remained strictly polite even if they felt amused. I ordered a hansom to be called, and we just contrived to squeeze both ourselves and the precious newspaper parcel inside it. The dressing-case was hoisted aloft. Then the hotel porter asked me, 'Where to, sir?'

'Charing Cross Station,' I replied, and the next moment we were bowling along Buckingham Palace Road.

Perhaps a minute elapsed before I tapped the

cab-roof with my walking stick. On cabby looking down at me, I said, 'Did I tell you Charing Cross just now, driver? Ah! well, I made a mistake. I meant Waterloo.'

'Right, sir,' rejoined cabby; and on we went.

It was a paltry device, perhaps, this trick of giving one direction in the hearing of the hotel servants, and then another when the hotel was out of sight. But, as the reader must know, this kind of thing is always done in novels—particularly in detective stories.

And recollections had come to me of some of Gaboriau's tales which long ago I had helped to place before the English public. It might be that the renowned Monsieur Lecoq or his successor, or perchance some English *confrère* like Mr. Sherlock Holmes, would presently be after us, and so it was just as well to play the game according to the orthodox rules of romance. After all, was it not in something akin to a romance that I was living?

IV

A CHANGE OF QUARTERS

IT should be mentioned that the departure of Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin from the Grosvenor Hotel took place almost immediately after Wareham had returned to his office. We were not to meet our friend the solicitor again until the evening at Wimbledon, but the hotel being apparently a dangerous spot, it was thought best to quit it forthwith.

When we reached Waterloo the dressing-case and the newspaper parcel were deposited at one of the cloak-rooms; and after making the round of the station, we descended into the Waterloo Road. At first we sauntered towards the New Cut, and of course M. Zola could not help noticing the contrast between the dingy surroundings amidst which he now found himself and the stylish shops and houses he had seen in the Buckingham Palace Road. The vista was not cheering, so I proposed

that we should retrace our steps and go as far as Waterloo Bridge.

There seemed to be little risk in doing so, for, as usual hereabouts in the middle of the afternoon, there were few people to be seen. The great successive rush of homeward-bound employers, clerks, and workpeople had not yet set in. And, moreover, there was plenty of time; for Wareham, having important business in town that day, could not possibly be at Wimbledon till half-past six at the earliest.

We reached the bridge—'that monument,' as a famous Frenchman once put in, 'worthy of Sesostris and the Cæsars'—and went about half-way across. It was splendid weather, and the Thames was aglow with the countless reflections of the sunbeams that fell from the hot, whitening sky. London was before us, 'with her palaces down to the water'; and M. Zola stopped short, gazing intently at the scene.

'Up-stream the view was spoilt,' said he, 'by the hideous Hungerford Bridge, unworthy alike of the city and the river'– an erection such as no Paris municipality would have tolerated for four and twenty hours. It was the more obtrusive and

aggravating, since beyond it one discerned but little of the towers of Westminster. 'Admitting,' added the novelist, 'that a bridge is needed at that point for railway traffic, surely there is no reason why it should be so surprisingly ugly. However, from all I see, it seems more and more evident that you English people are very much in the habit of sacrificing beauty to utility, forgetting that with a little artistic sense it is easy to combine the two.'

Then, however, he turned slightly, and looked down-stream where the Victoria Embankment spreads past the Temple to Blackfriars. The colonnades of Somerset House showed boldly and with a certain majesty in the foreground, whilst in the distance, high over every roof, arose the leaden dome of St. Paul's. This vista was rather to M. Zola's liking. Close beside us, on the bridge, was one of the semi-circular embrasures garnished with stone seats. A pitiful-looking vagrant was lolling there; but this made no difference to M. Zola. He installed himself on the seat with Desmoulin on one hand and myself on the other, and there we remained for some little time looking about us and chatting.

'This was the only thing wanted,' said Desmoulin, who generally had some humorous remark in readiness for every situation. 'Yesterday at the Grosvenor we were in the *fossé de Vincennes*, and now, as they say in the melodrama of "The Knights of the Fog" ("Les Chevaliers du Brouillard"[1]), we are "homeless wanderers stranded on the bridges of London."'

The allusion to the fog roused M. Zola from his contemplation.

'But where is the Savoy Hotel, where I stayed in '93?' he inquired. 'It must be very near here.'

I pointed it out to him, and he was astonished. 'Why, no—that cannot be it! It was so large a place, and now it looks so small. What is that huge building beside it?'

'The Hotel Cecil,' I replied.

Then again he shook his head in disapproval. From an artistic standpoint he strongly objected to the huge caravansary on which builder Hobbs and pious Jabez Balfour spent so much of other people's money. Soaring massively and preten-

[1] The French dramatic adaptation of Ainsworth's 'Jack Sheppard.'

tiously into the sky it dwarfed everything around; and thus, in his opinion, utterly spoilt that part of the Embankment.

'To think, too,' said he, 'that you had such a site, here, along the river, and allowed it to be used for hotels and clubs, and so forth. There was room for a Louvre here, and you want one badly; for your National Gallery, which I well remember visiting in '93, is a most wretched affair architecturally.'

'But I want to see rather more of the south side of the river,' he added, after a pause. 'I should like to ascertain if my lion is still there. I recollect that there was some fog about on the morning after my arrival at the Savoy in '93; and when I went to the window of my room I noticed the mist parting—one mass of vapour ascending skyward, while the other still hovered over the river. And, in the rent between, I espied a lion, poised in mid air. It amused me vastly; and I called my wife, saying to her, "Come and see. Here's the British lion waiting to bid us good-day."'

We went to the end of the bridge and thence espied the lion which surmounts the brewery of

that name. M. Zola recognised it immediately. Desmoulin would then have led us Strandward; but the Strand, said I, was about the most dangerous thoroughfare in all London for those who wished to escape recognition; so we went back over the bridge and again down the Waterloo road.

'I should very much like to send a line to Paris to-day to stop letters from going to the Grosvenor,' said M. Zola. 'Is there any place hereabouts where I could write a note?'

This question perplexed me, for the numerous facilities for letter-writing which are supplied by the *cafés* of Paris are conspicuously absent in London; and this I explained to M. Zola. A postage stamp may often be procured at a public-house, but only now and again can one there obtain ink and paper. However, I thought we might as well try the saloon bar of the York Hotel, which abuts on that famous 'Poverty Corner,' so much frequented by ladies and gentlemen of the 'halls,' when, sorely against their inclinations, they are 'resting.'

It was Thursday afternoon; still there were several disconsolate-looking individuals lounging

about the corner; and in the saloon bar we found some fourteen or fifteen loudly dressed men and women typical of the spot. I forget what I ordered for Desmoulin and myself, but M. Zola, I know imbibed, mainly for the good of the house, 'a small lemon plain.' Then we ascertained that the young lady at the bar had neither stamps, nor paper, nor envelopes, and so we were again in a quandary. Fortunately I recollected a little stationer's shop in the York Road, and leaving the others in the saloon bar, I went in search of the requisite materials.

When I returned I found the master an object of general attention. His extremely prosperous appearance, his white billycock, his jewellery, and so forth, coupled with the circumstance that he conversed in French with Desmoulin, had led some of those present to imagine that he was a Continental music-hall director on the look out for English 'artists.'

Again and again I noticed, as it were, a 'hungry' glance in his direction; and when, after procuring an inkstand from over the bar, I had ensconced him in a corner, where he was able after a fashion to pen his correspondence, a viva-

cious and, it seemed to me, somewhat bibulous gentleman in a check suit sidled up to where I stood and introduced himself in that easy way which repeated 'drops' of 'Mountain Dew' are apt to engender.

'Ah!' said he, after a few pointless remarks, 'your friend is over here on business, eh? Right thing, splendid thing. It's only by looking round that one can get real tip-top novelties. Oh! I know Paree and the bouleywards well enough. I was on at the Follee Bergey only a few years ago myself. A good place that—pays well, eh? I shouldn't at all mind taking a trip across the water again. There's nothing like a change, you know. Sets a man up, eh?'

Then mysteriously—lifting his forefinger and lowering his voice, 'Now your friend wants "talent," eh? Real, genuine "talent"! I could put him in the way——'

But I interposed: 'You've applied to the wrong shop,' I said by way of a joke; 'my friend has all the talent he requires. He's quite full up.'

A sorrowful look came over the angular features of the gentleman in the check suit. 'It's like my luck,' said he; 'there was a fellow over from

Amsterdam the other day, but he'd only take girls. I think the Continental line's pretty nigh played out.'

He heaved a sigh and glanced in the direction of his empty glass. Then, seeing that the novelist and Desmoulin were rising to join me, he whispered hurriedly, '*I say, guv'nor, you haven't got a tanner you could spare, have you?*'

I had foreseen the request; nevertheless I pressed a few coppers into his hand and then hurried out after my wards.

Though it was still early we decided to start at once for Wimbledon. The master, I thought, might like to see a little of the place pending Wareham's arrival.

The journey through Lambeth, Vauxhall, and Queen's Road is not calculated to give the intelligent foreigner a particularly favourable impression of London. Still M. Zola did not at first find the surroundings very much worse than those one observes on leaving Paris by the Northern or Eastern lines. But as the train went on and on and much the same scene appeared on either hand he began to wonder when it would all end.

On approaching Clapham Junction a sea of

roofs is to be seen on the right stretching away through Battersea to the Thames; while on the left a huge wave of houses ascends the acclivity known, I believe, as Lavender Hill. And at the sight of all the mean, dusty streets, lined with little houses of uniform pattern, each close pressed to the other—at the frequently recurring glimpses of squalor and shabby gentility—M. Zola exploded.

'It is awful!' he said.

We were alone in our compartment, and he looked first from one window and then from the other. Next came a torrent of questions: Why were the houses so small? Why were they all so ugly and so much alike? What classes of people lived in them? Why were the roads so dusty? Why was there such a litter of fragments of paper lying about everywhere? Were those streets never watered? Was there no scavengers' service? And then a remark: 'You see that house, it looks fairly clean and neat in front. But there! look at the back-yard—all rubbish and poverty! One notices that again and again!'

We passed Clapham Junction, pursuing our journey through the cutting which intersects Wandsworth Common. 'Well,' I said, 'you may

take it that, except as regards the postal and police services, you are now out of London proper.'

Presently, indeed, we emerged from the cutting, and fields were seen on either hand. One could breathe at last. But as we approached Earlsfield Station all M. Zola's attention was given to a long row of low-lying houses whose yards and gardens extend to the railway line Now and again a trim patch of ground was seen ; here, too, there was a little glass-house, there an attempt at an arbour. But litter and rubbish were only too often apparent.

'This, I suppose,' said the novelist, 'is what you call a London slum invading the country? You tell me that only a part of the *bourgeoisie* cares for flats, and that among the lower middle class and the working class each family prefers to rent its own little house. Is this for the sake of privacy? If so, I see no privacy here. Leaving out the question of being overlooked from passing trains, observe the open four-foot fences which separate one garden or yard from the other There is no privacy at all! To me the manner in which your poorer classes are housed in the suburbs, packed closely together in flimsy buildings, where every

sound can be heard, suggests a form of socialism —communism, or perhaps rather the phalansterian system.'

But Earlsfield was already passed, and we were reaching Wimbledon. Here M. Zola's impressions changed. True, he did not have occasion to perambulate what he would doubtless have called the 'phalansterian' streets of new South Wimbledon. I spared him the sight of the chess-board of bricks and mortar into which the speculative builder has turned acre after acre north of Merton High Street. But the Hill Road, the Broadway, the Worple Road, and the various turnings that climb towards the Ridgeway pleased him. And he commented very favourably on the shops in the Broadway and the Hill Road, which in the waning sunshine still looked gay and bright. At every moment he stopped to examine something. Such displays of fruit, and fish, poultry, meat, and provisions of all kinds; the drapers' windows all aglow with summer fabrics, and those of the jewellers coruscating with gold and gems. Then the public-houses—dignified by the name of hotels, though I explained that they had no hotel accommodation —bespoke all the wealth of a powerful trade.

There was an imposing bank, too, and a stylish carriage builder's, with furniture shops, stationers, pastrycooks, hairdressers, ironmongers, and so forth, whose displays testified to the prosperity of the town. Again and again did M. Zola express the opinion that these Wimbledon shops were by far superior to such as one would find in a French town of corresponding size and at a similar distance from the capital.

We sauntered up and down the Hill Road, looking in at the Free Library on our way. Then, on passing the Alexandra Road, I explained to Desmoulin that he would sleep there, at No. 20, where Wareham has a local office and where his managing clerk, Everson by name, resides.

The arrangement with Wareham had been concluded so precipitately that, to spare him unnecessary trouble at home, we had arranged to dine that evening at a local restaurant—in fact, the only restaurant possessed by Wimbledon. Wareham was to join us there. The proprietor, Mr. Genoni, is of foreign origin, but Wareham knowing him personally had assured me that even should he suspect our friend's identity his discretion

might readily be relied upon. And so the sequel proved. During our repast, however, I felt a little doubtful about one of the waiters who knew French, and I therefore cautioned M. Zola and M. Desmoulin to be as reticent as possible.

After dinner we adjourned to Wareham's house in Prince's Road, where Mrs. Wareham gave the travellers the most cordial of welcomes. The conversation was chiefly confined to the question of finding some suitable place where M. Zola might settle down for his term of exile. He, himself, was so taken with what he had seen of Wimbledon that he suggested renting a furnished house there. This seemed a trifle dangerous, both to Wareham and myself; but the novelist was not to be gainsaid; and as Wareham, in anticipation of his services being required, had made special arrangements to give M. Zola most of his time on the morrow, we arranged to see some house agents, engage a landau, and drive round to visit such places as might seem suitable.

It was nearly half-past eleven when I left Wareham's to escort Desmoulin to the Alexandra Road. I there left him in charge of his host, Mr.

Everson, and then turning (by way of a short cut) into the Lover's Walk, which the South Western Railway Company so considerately provides for amorous Wimbledonians, I hurried homeward, wondering what the morrow would bring forth.

V

WIMBLEDON—OATLANDS

IT will be obvious to all readers of this narrative that from the moment M. Zola left Paris, and throughout his sojourn in London and its immediate neighbourhood, there was little if any skill shown in the matter of keeping his movements secret. In point of fact, blunder upon blunder was committed. A first mistake was made in going to an hotel like the Grosvenor; a second in openly promenading some of the most frequented of the London streets; and a third in declining to make the slightest alteration with regard to personal appearance. Again, although press of circumstances rendered departure for Wimbledon a necessity, as it was imperative to get M. Zola out of London at once, this change of quarters was in the end scarcely conducive to

secrecy. A good many Wimbledonians were aware of my connection with M. Zola, and even if he were not personally recognised by them, the circumstance of a French gentleman of striking appearance being seen in my company was fated to arouse suspicion. My home is but a mile or so from the centre of Wimbledon, and M. Zola's proposal to make that locality his place of sojourn seemed to me such a dangerous course that when I returned to Wareham's house on the morning of Friday, July 22, I was determined to oppose it, in the master's own interests, as vigorously as might be possible.

However, I found Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin ready to start for an inspection of such furnished houses as might seem suitable for their accommodation ; and nothing urged either by Wareham or by myself could turn them from their purpose. So the four of us took our seats in the landau which had been ordered, and were soon driving in the direction of Wimbledon Park, where stood the first of the eligible residences entered in the books of a local house agent. The terms for these houses varied, if I recollect rightly, from four to seven guineas a week. Some we did not trouble

to enter; others, however, were carefully inspected.

Nothing in the way of a terrace house would suit; for M. Zola was not yet a phalansterian. And in like way he objected to the semi-detached villas. He wished to secure a somewhat retired place, girt with foliage and thus screened from the observation of neighbours and passers-by. The low garden railings and fences usually met with were by no means to his taste. The flimsy party walls of the semi-detached villas, through which every sound so swiftly passes, were equally objectionable to him. And I must say that I viewed with some little satisfaction his dislike for several of the houses which we visited; for this made it the easier to dissuade him from his plan of fixing his abode in Wimbledon, where, unless he should rigidly confine himself within doors, it was certain that his presence would be known before a week was over.

There were, however, some houses which the master found to his liking; and here he lingered awhile, inspecting the rooms, taking stock of the furniture, examining the engravings and water-colours on the walls, and viewing the trim gardens

with visible satisfaction. One place, a large house in one of the precipitous roads leading from the Ridgeway to the Worple Road, was, perhaps, rather too open for his requirements, but its appointments were perfect, and at his bidding I plied the lady of the house with innumerable questions about plate, linen, and garden produce, the servants she offered to leave behind her, and so forth. She was a tall and stately dame, with silver hair and a soft musical voice—a perfect type of the old *marquise*, such as one sees portrayed at times on the boards of the Comédie Française, and after I had acted as interpreter for a quarter of an hour or so, she suddenly turned upon the master and, to the surprise of all of us, addressed him in perfect French. It was this which broke the spell. Though M. Zola was taken aback, he responded politely enough, and the conversation went on in French for some minutes, but I could already tell that he had renounced his intention of renting the house. When we drove away, after promising the lady a decisive answer within a day or two, he said to me:

'That would never do. The lady's French was too good. She looked at me rather suspiciously

too. She would soon discover my identity. She has probably heard of me already.'

'Who hasn't?' I responded with a laugh. And once again I brought forward the objections that occurred to me with respect to the plan of remaining at Wimbledon. It was a centre of Roman Catholic activity. There was a Jesuit college there, numbering both French professors and French pupils. Moreover, several French families resided in Wimbledon, and with some of them I was myself acquainted. Then also the population included a good many literary men, journalists, and others who took an interest in the Dreyfus case. And, finally, the town was far too near to London to be in anywise a safe hiding-place.

Nevertheless, M. Zola only abandoned his intentions with regret. In that bright sunshiny weather there was an attractive *je ne sais quoi* about Wimbledon which charmed him. Not that it was in his estimation an ideal place. The descents from the hill and the Ridgeway (though he admired the beautiful views they afforded, stretching as far as Norwood) appalled him from certain practical standpoints, and he was never weary of expatiating on the pluck of the girls who cycled so boldly and

gracefully from the hill crest to the lower parts of the town. Here it may be mentioned that M. Zola has become reconciled to the skirt as a cycling garment. Once upon a time he was an uncompromising partisan of 'rationals' and 'bloomers,' a warm adherent of the views which Lady Harberton and her friends uphold. But sojourn in England has changed all that—at least so far as the English type of girl is concerned. Those who have read his novel, 'Paris,' may remember that he therein ascribed the following remarks to his heroine—Marie: 'Ah! there is nothing like rationals! To think that some women are so foolish and obstinate as to wear skirts when they cycle! . . . To think that women have a unique opportunity of putting themselves at their ease and releasing their limbs from prison, and yet won't do so! If they fancy they look the prettier in short skirts, like schoolgirls, they are vastly mistaken. . . . Skirts are rank heresy.'

Well, so far as Englishwomen are concerned, M. Zola himself has become a heretic. 'Rationals,' he has more than once said to me of recent times, 'are not suited to the lithe and somewhat spare figure of the average English girl. Moreover, I

doubt if there is a costumier in England who knows how to cut "rationals" properly. Such women as I have seen in rationals in England looked to me horrible. They had not the proper figure for the garment, and the garment itself was badly made. For rationals to suit a woman, her figure should be of the happy medium, neither too slim nor over-developed. Now the great bulk of your girls are extremely slim, and appear in skirts to advantage. In cycling, moreover, they carry themselves much better than the majority of Frenchwomen do. They sit their machines gracefully, and the skirt, instead of being a mere bundle of stuff, falls evenly and fittingly like a necessary adjunct—the drapery which is needed to complete and set off the *ensemble*.'

At the same time, the master does not cry 'haro' on the 'bloomer.' It is admirably suited, he maintains, to the average Frenchwoman, who is more inclined to a reasonable plumpness than her English sister. 'The skirt to England,' says he, 'the bloomer to France.' The whole question is one of physique and latitude. The Esquimaux lady would look ungainly and feel uncomfortable if she exchanged her moose furs for the wisp of calico

which is patronised by the lady of Senegal; and in the like way the Englishwoman is manifestly ungainly and uncomfortable when she borrows the breeches of the Parisienne.

This digression may seem to carry one away from Wimbledon, but I should mention that many of the points enunciated were touched upon by M. Zola for the first time, while we postponed further house-hunting to drive over Wimbledon Common. The historic mill, and Cæsar's Camp, and the picturesque meres were all viewed before the horses' heads were turned to the town once more.

By this time the master had come to the conclusion that however pleasant Wimbledon might be, it was no fit place for him, and that his best course would be to pitch his tent 'far from gay cities and the ways of men.' Within a few hours I had some proof of the wisdom of his decision, and a week had not elapsed before I found that M. Zola's sojourn at Wimbledon had become known to a variety of people. Mr. Genoni, the restaurateur, had been one of the first to identify him; but, as he explained to me, he was no spy or betrayer, and whatever he might think of the

Dreyfus business—he was a reader of that anti-Revisionist print the 'Petit Journal'—M. Zola's secret was, he assured me, quite safe in his hands. But, independently of Mr. Genoni, the secret soon became *le secret de Polichinelle.* A French resident in Wimbledon recognised M. Zola as he stood one day by the railway bridge admiring some fair cyclists. Then a gentleman connected with the local Petty Sessions court espied him in my company, and shrewdly guessed his identity. Subsequently a local hairdresser, an Englishman, but one well acquainted with Paris and Parisian matters, 'spotted' him in the Hill Road. Others followed suit, and at last one afternoon a member of the 'Globe' staff called upon me and supplied me with such circumstantial particulars that I could not possibly deny the accuracy of his information. But M. Zola had then left Wimbledon, and thus I was able to fence with my visitor and inform him that, even if the novelist had ever been in the town, he was not there at that time.

It had been arranged that some of the leading London house agents should be written to, with the view of securing some secluded country house,

preferably in Surrey, and on the South Western line; but the question was, where, in the meanwhile, could M. Zola be conveniently installed? Having left England in the year 1865, and apart from a few brief sojourns in London, having remained abroad till 1886, my knowledge of my native land is very slight indeed. Years spent in foreign countries have made me a stay-at-home—one who nowadays buries himself in his little London suburb, going to town as seldom as possible, and without need of country or seaside trip, since at Merton, where I live, there are green fields all around one and every vivifying breeze that can be wished for. Thus I was the worst person in the world to take charge of M. Zola and pilot him safely to a haven of refuge.

Fortunately, Mr. Wareham knows his way about, as the saying goes, and his cycling experiences proved very useful. He suggested that until a house could be secured, M. Zola should be installed at a country hotel; and he mentioned two or three places which seemed to him of the right character. One of these was Oatlands Park; and Wareham, who, although a solicitor, claims to have some little poetry in his nature, waxed so

enthusiastic over the charms of Oatlands and neighbouring localities, that both M. Zola and M. Desmoulin, fervent admirers of scenery as they are, became curious to visit this leafy district of Surrey, where, as will be remembered, King Louis Philippe spent his last years of life and exile.

One afternoon, then, I started with Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin for Walton, from which station the Oatlands Park Hotel is most conveniently reached. A Gladstone bag had now replaced the master's newspaper parcel, and as M. Desmoulin's dressing-case was as large as a valise, there was at least some semblance of luggage. I fully realised that it was hardly the correct thing to present oneself at Oatlands Park and ask for rooms there *ex abrupto*; as with hostelries of that class it is usual for one to write and secure accommodation beforehand. However, there was no time for this; and we decided to run the risk of finding the hotel 'full up,' particularly as Wareham had informed us that in such a case we might secure a temporary billet at one or another of the smaller hotels of Walton or Weybridge. Thus we went our way at all hazards, and during the journey

I devised a little story for the benefit of the manager at Oatlands Park.

That gentleman, as I had surmised, was a trifle astonished at our appearance. But I told him that my friends were a couple of French artists, who had been spending a few weeks in London 'doing the lions' there, and who had heard of the charming scenery around Oatlands, and wished to view it, and possibly make a few sketches. And, at the same time, a solicitor's recommendation being of some value, since it might mean a good many future customers, I handed the manager one of Wareham's cards. There was, I remember, some little difficulty at first in obtaining rooms, for the hotel was nearly full; but everything ended satisfactorily.

I may mention, perhaps, that in describing Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin as French artists, I had at least told half the truth. M. Fernand Desmoulin is, of course, well known in the French art world; and, moreover, he had already spoken to me of purchasing a water-colour outfit for the very purpose of sketching, as I had stated. Then, too, M. Zola first distinguished himself in literature as an art critic, the defender of Manet, the champion

of the school of the 'open air.' And if he made no sketches whilst he remained at Oatlands he at least took several photographs. Sapient critics will stop me here with the oft-repeated dictum that photography is not art. But however that may be, so many painters nowadays have recourse to the assistance of photography that M. Zola's 'snap-shotting' largely helped to bear out the account which I had given of him at the hotel.

Oatlands Park is a large pile standing on the site of a magnificent palace built by Henry VIII. Anne of Denmark, wife of James I., resided there, and Henrietta Maria there gave birth to the Duke of Gloucester, the brother of our second Charles and second James. The palace was almost entirely destroyed during the Civil Wars, and subsequently the property passed in turn to Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans; Herbert, the admiral, first Earl of Torrington; and Henry, seventh Earl of Lincoln. A descendant of the last-named sold the estate to Frederick, Duke of York, the son of George III. and Commander-in-Chief of the British army. Soon afterwards the house at Oatlands was destroyed by fire, and the prince erected a

new building, some portions of which are incorporated in the present hostelry. A pathetic interest attaches to those remains of York House. Within those walls were spent many of the honeymoon hours of a fair and virtuous princess, one whose early death plunged England into the deepest grief it had known for centuries; there she conceived the child who in the ordinary course of nature might have become King of Great Britain. But the babe, so anxiously awaited by the whole nation (there was no Princess Victoria at that time) proved stillborn; and of the unhappy 'mother of a moment,' Byron wrote in immortal lines:

> Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;
> Thy bridal's fruit is ashes; in the dust
> The fair-hair'd Daughter of the Isles is laid,
> The love of millions!

I am bound to add that the tragic story of the Princess Charlotte was not that which most appealed to M. Zola's feelings at Oatlands Park. Nor was he particularly impressed by the far-famed grotto which the hotel handbook states 'has no parallel in the world.' The grotto, an artificial affair, the creation of which is due to a

Duke of Newcastle, whom it cost 40,000*l.*, besides giving employment to three men for twenty years, consists of numerous chambers and passages, whose walls are inlaid with coloured spars, shells, coral, ammonites, and crystals. This work is ingenious enough, but when one enters a bath-room and finds a stuffed alligator there, keeping company with a statue of Venus and a terra-cotta of the infant Hercules, one is apt to remember how perilously near the ridiculous is to the sublime.

Ridiculous also to some minds may seem the Duchess of York's dog and monkey cemetery, in which half a hundred of that lady's canine and simian pets lie buried with headstones to their tombs commemorating their virtues. This cemetery, however, greatly commended itself to M. Zola, who, as some may know, is a rare lover of animals. Among the various distinctions accorded to him in happier times by his compatriots there is none that he has ever prized more highly than the diploma of honour he received from the French 'Society for the Protection of Animals,' and I believe that one of the happiest moments he ever knew was when, as Government delegate

at a meeting of that society, he fastened a gold medal on the bosom of a blushing little shepherdess, a certain Mlle. Camelin, of Trionne, in Upper Burgundy, a girl of sixteen, who, at the peril of her life, had engaged a ravenous wolf in single combat, killed him, and thereby saved her flock.

And M. Zola's books teem with his love of animals. During his long exile one of the few requests addressed to him from France, to which he inclined a favourable ear, was an appeal on behalf of a new journal devoted to the interests of the animal world. To this he could not refuse his patronage, and he gave it enthusiastically, well knowing how much remains to be accomplished in inculcating among the masses such affection and patience as are rightful with regard to those dumb creatures who serve man so well.

The Duchess of York's cemetery reminded him of his own. Below his house at Médan a green islet rises from the Seine. This he purchased some years ago, and there all his favourites have since been buried: an old horse, a goat, and several dogs. During his exile a fresh interment took place in this island cemetery, that of his last canine favourite, the poor 'Chevalier de Perlin-

pinpin,' who, after vainly fretting for his absent master, died at last of sheer grief and loneliness. Those only can understand Emile Zola who have seen him as I saw him then, bowed down with sorrow, distraught, indifferent to all else, both the weightiest personal interests and the very triumph of the cause he had championed; and this because his pet dog had pined away for him, and was beyond all possibility of succour. It was of course a passing weakness with him; such weakness as may fall upon a man of kindly heart. In Zola's case it came, however, almost like a last blow amidst the sorrow and loneliness of the exile which he was enduring in silence for the sake of his much-loved country.

VI

STILL AT OATLANDS

FOR a time, at all events, Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin found themselves in fairly pleasant quarters; they could stroll about the gardens at Oatlands or along the umbrageous roads of Walton, or beside the pretty reaches of the Thames, amidst all desirable quietude. After all his worries the master needed complete mental rest, and he laughed at his friend's repeated appeals for newspapers.

At that period I procured a few French journals every time I went to town and posted them to Oatlands, where they were eagerly conned by M. Desmoulin, on whom the Dreyfus fever was as strong as ever. But M. Zola during the first fortnight of his exile did not once cast eyes upon a newspaper, and the only information he obtained respecting passing events was such as

Desmoulin or myself imparted to him. And in this he evinced little interest. Half of it, he said, was absolutely untrue, and the other half was of no importance. There is certainly much force and truth in this curtly-worded opinion as applied to the contents of certain Paris journals.

However, communications were now being opened up between the master and his Paris friends, and every few days Wareham or myself had occasion to go to Oatlands. There were sundry false alarms, too, through strangers calling at Wareham's office, and now and again my sudden appearance at the hotel threw Messrs. Zola and Desmoulin into anxiety. In other respects their life was quiet enough. The people staying at Oatlands were, on the whole, a much less inquisitive class than those whom one had found at the Grosvenor. There were various honeymoon-making couples, who were far too busy feasting their eyes on one another to pay much attention to the two French artists. Then, also, the family people gave time to the superintendence of their sons and daughters; whilst the old folks only seemed to care for a leisurely stroll about the grounds, followed by long spells of book or

newspaper reading, under the shelter of tree or sunshade.

Moreover the exiles saw little of the other inmates of the hotel, excepting at the *table d'hôte* dinner. M. Zola then brought his faculties of observation into play, and after the lapse of a few days he informed me that he was astonished at the ease and frequency with which some English girls raised their wine-glasses to their lips. It upset all his ideas of propriety to see young ladies of eighteen tossing off their Moselle and their champagne as to the manner born. In France the daughter who is properly trained contents herself with water just coloured by the addition of a little Bordeaux or Burgundy. And the contrast between this custom and incidents which M. Zola noticed at Oatlands—and to which he once or twice called my attention—made a deep impression on him.

The people staying at the hotel were certainly all of a good class. There were several well-known names in the register; and knowing how much has been written on the happy decrease of drinking habits 'in the upper middle-class of England,' I was myself slightly surprised at what was pointed out to me. When M. Zola discovered, too, that

sundry gentlemen—leaving wine to their wives and daughters—were addicted to drinking whisky with their meals, he was yet more astonished, for he claims that in France nowadays, greatly as the consumption of alcohol has increased among the masses, it has declined almost to vanishing point among people with any claim to culture. On this matter, however, I reminded him that wine was often expensive in England, that beer disagreed with many people, and that some who felt the need of a stimulant were thus driven to whisky and water.

When the master and Desmoulin wandered down to the Thames towing-path, they found fresh food for observation and comment among the boating fraternity. With some gay parties were damsels whose disregard for decorum was strongly reminiscent of Asnières and Joinville-le-Pont ; and it was slightly embarrassing to stroll near the river in the evening, when at every few yards one found young couples exchanging kisses in the shadows of the trees. After all it was surprise rather than embarrassment which the exiles experienced, for they had scarcely imagined that English training was conducive to such public endearments.

At a later stage a bicycle was procured for the master, and he was then able to extend his sphere of observation ; but in the earlier days at Oatlands his rambles were confined to the vicinity of Walton and Weybridge. At the latter village he laid in a fresh stock of linen, and was soon complaining of the exiguous proportions of English shirts. The Frenchman, it should be remembered, is a man of many gestures, and desires all possible freedom of action for his arms. His shirt is cut accordingly, and a superabundance rather than a deficiency of material in length as well as breadth is the result. But the English shirt-maker proceeds upon different lines ; he always seems afraid of wasting a few inches of longcloth, and thus if the ordinary ready-made shirt on sale at shops of the average class is dressy-looking enough, it is also often supremely uncomfortable to those who like their ease. Such, at least, was the master's experience ; and in certain respects, said he, the English shirt was not only uncomfortable, but indecorous as well. This astonished him with a nation which claimed to show so much regard for the proprieties.

The desire to clothe himself according to his

wont became so keen that M. Desmoulin decided to make an expedition to Paris. All this time Mme. Zola had remained alone at the house in the Rue de Bruxelles, outside which, as at Médan (where the Zolas have their country residence), detectives were permanently stationed. Mme. Zola was shadowed wherever she went, the idea, of course, being that she would promptly follow her husband abroad. She had, however, ample duties to discharge in Paris. At the same time she much wished to send her husband a trunkful of clothes as well as the materials for a new book he had planned, in order that he might have some occupation in his sorrow and loneliness.

Most people are by this time aware that M. Zola's gospel is work. In diligent study and composition he finds some measure of solace for every trouble. At times it is hard for him to take up the pen, but he forces himself to do so, and an hour later he has largely banished sorrow and anxiety, and at times has even dulled physical pain. He himself, heavy hearted as he was when the first novelty of his strolls round Oatlands had worn off, felt that he must have something to do, and was therefore well pleased at the prospect

of receiving the materials for his new book, 'Fécondité.'

At that date he certainly did not imagine that the whole of this work would be written in England, that his exile would drag on month after month till winter would come and spring return, followed once more by summer. In those days we used to say: 'It will all be over in a fortnight, or three weeks, or a month at the latest; and again and again did our hopes alternately collapse and revive. Thus the few chapters of 'Fécondité,' which he thought he might be able to pen in England, multiplied and multiplied till they at last became thirty—the entire work.

It was M. Desmoulin who brought the necessary materials—memoranda, cuttings, and a score of scientific works—from Paris. And at the same time he had a trunk with him full of clothes which had been smuggled in small parcels out of M. Zola's house, carried to the residence of a friend, and there properly packed. Desmoulin also brought a hand camera, which likewise proved very acceptable to the master, and enabled him to take many little photographs—almost a complete pictorial record of his English experiences.

During Desmoulin's absence the master remained virtually alone at Oatlands, and as he still cared nothing for newspapers I sent him a few books from my shelves, and, among others, Stendhal's 'La Chartreuse de Parme.' He wrote me afterwards: 'I am very grateful to you for the books you sent. Now that I am utterly alone they enabled me to spend a pleasant day yesterday. I am reading "La Chartreuse." I am without news from France. If you hear of anything really serious pray let me know it.'

By this time proper arrangements had been made with regard to M. Zola's correspondence. His exact whereabouts were kept absolutely secret even from his most intimate friends. Everybody, his wife and Mâitre Labori also, addressed their letters to Wareham's office in Bishopsgate Street. Here the correspondence was enclosed in a large envelope and redirected to Oatlands. With regard to visitors Wareham and I had decided to give the master's address to none. Wareham intended to take their cards, ascertain their London address, and then refer the matter through me to M. Zola. Later on, a regular supply of French newspapers was arranged, and those journals

were re-transmitted to the master by Wareham or myself.

On the other hand, I usually addressed M. Zola's letters for him to the house of a trusty friend in Paris. This precaution was a necessary one, as M. Zola's handwriting is so extremely characteristic and so well known in France. And thus we were convinced that any letter arriving in Paris addressed by him would immediately be sent to the 'Cabinet Noir,' where all suspicious correspondence is opened by certain officials, who immediately report the contents to the Government.

It has been pretended that of recent years this secret service has been abolished; but such is by no means the case. It flourishes to-day in the same way as it flourished under the Second Empire, when Napoleon III. made a point of acquainting himself with the private correspondence of his own relatives, his ministers, and his generals. After the revolution of September 1870, hundreds of copies of more or less compromising letters, covert attacks on or criticisms of the Imperial Government, *billets-doux* also between Imperial princes and their mistresses, and so forth, were found at the Palace of the Tuileries; and some of them were even

published by a commission nominated by the Republican Government.

Much of the same kind of thing goes on to-day, and M. Zola, when in Paris during the earlier stages of the Dreyfus case, had made it a point to trust no letter of the slightest importance to the Postal Service. On one occasion, a short time after his arrival in England, we had reason to fear that a letter addressed by me to Paris had gone astray, and all correspondence on M. Zola's side was thereupon suspended for several days. However, the missing letter turned up at last, and from that time till the conclusion of the master's exile the arrangements devised between him, Wareham, and myself worked without a hitch.

VII

EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

ALREADY at the time of M. Zola's arrival in London I had received a summons to serve upon the jury at the July Sessions of the Central Criminal Court. I had been excused from service on a previous occasion, but this time I had no valid excuse to offer, and it followed that I must either serve or else pay such a fine as the Common Serjeant might direct. There is always a certain element of doubt in these matters; and while I might perhaps luckily escape service after a day or two, on the other hand, I might be kept at the Old Bailey for more than a week. At any other time I should have accepted my fate without a murmur; but I was greatly worried as to what might befall M. Zola during my absence in London, and I more than once thought of defaulting and 'paying up.' But the master would not hear of it. He was now

located at Oatlands, and felt sure that he would have no trouble there. Moreover, said he, it would always be possible for me to run down now and again of an evening, dine with him, and attend to such little matters as might require my help.

So, on the Monday morning when the sessions opened, I duly repaired to town; and on the journey up, I saw in the 'Daily Chronicle' the announcement of M. Zola's recent presence at the Grosvenor Hotel. This gave me quite a shock. So the Press was on the right track at last! Starting from the Grosvenor Hotel, might not the reporters trace the master to Wimbledon, and thence to his present retreat? I had no time for hesitation. My instructions, moreover, were imperative. For the benefit of M. Zola personally, and for the benefit of the whole Dreyfus cause, I had orders to deny everything. So I drove to the Press Association offices, sent up a contradiction of the 'Daily Chronicle's' statement, and then hurried up Ludgate Hill to the Court, where my name was soon afterwards called.

I found myself on the second or third jury got together, and that day I was not empanelled. But on the morrow I was required to do duty; and

between then and the latter part of the week I sat upon four or five cases—all crimes of violence, and one described in the indictment as murder. This position was the more unpleasant for me, as I am, by strong conviction, an adversary of capital punishment. I absolutely deny the right of society to put any man or any woman to death, whatever be his or her crime. My proper course then seemed to lie in the direction of a public statement, which would have created, I suppose, some little sensation or scandal; but happily the prosecuting counsel in his very first words abandoned the count of murder for that of manslaughter, and I was thereby relieved from my predicament.

The cases on which I sat, and those to which I listened while I remained in attendance, need not be particularised. I will merely mention that they were nearly all due to drink. Mr. Justice Lawrance, who sat upon the bench, was visibly impressed by the circumstance, to which he more than once alluded in his summings up. In one case he was so good as to refer to a question, put by me from the jury box, as a proper and pertinent one, at which I naturally felt vastly complimented. On the second or third day, either before the

proceedings began or when the Court rose for luncheon—I do not exactly remember which—a gentleman approached me, and introduced himself as a member of the Press. Said he, 'I have been asking Mr. Avory for you. You are Mr. Vizetelly, I believe?'

'That is my name,' I answered.

'Well, I have come to speak to you about M. Zola's presence in England.'

I should here mention that, in spite of my contradiction of the 'Chronicle' story, there remained some people who had reason to believe it. Moreover, it had been more or less confirmed by the 'Morning Leader,' and some editors, rightly surmising that if M. Zola were in London he would very likely be in communication with his usual translator, had despatched reporters to my house, where my wife had seen them. On learning that I was quietly doing jury service at the Old Bailey, some had apparently concluded that I was not concerned in M. Zola's movements, which, so it happened, was the very conclusion I had desired them to arrive at. One gentleman, however, not content with his repulse at my house, had followed me to the Court.

I answered his inquiries with a variety of suggestions. Zola in England, and in London too! Well, we had heard that before, said I. But was it a probable course for the novelist to take? He knew no English, and had but few personal friends in England. His portraits, however, were in several shops and in many newspapers. And only a few years previously he had been seen by a thousand English pressmen and others. So would he not be liable to recognition almost immediately? Now, the only modern language besides French of which M. Zola had any knowledge was Italian. And if I were in his place, I said, I should go to Italy—for instance, to one of the little towns in the north, whence, if needful, one could cross over into Switzerland; though, of course, there was little likelihood that the Italian Government would ever surrender the distinguished writer to his persecutors.

Continuing in this strain I gave my interviewer material for a very plausible article, which I remember was duly published, and which thus helped to divert attention from the right scent.

At the week-end, having given considerable time to jury duties, I was compelled to spend

Saturday morning in London on business, and in the afternoon I allowed myself a few hours' relaxation. Reaching Wimbledon about eight in the evening I called on Wareham, who received me with a great show of satisfaction; for, said he, my services had been required for some hours past and nobody had known where I might be. That day, it seemed, just before Wareham had left his Bishopsgate Street office, he had received a visit from a most singular-looking little Frenchman, who had presented one of Maître Labori's visiting cards and requested an interview with M. Zola. Questioned as to his business, the only explanation he would give was that he had with him a document in a sealed envelope which he must place in M. Zola's own hands. Wareham had wired to me on the matter, but owing to my absence from home had of course received no reply. Then, on reaching Wimbledon, he had called on me and found me out. And, finally, he had gone down to Oatlands and had there seen M. Zola, who had handed him a note authorising Maître Labori's messenger to call at the hotel on the morrow. However, the messenger and his manners had seemed very suspicious to Wareham—as, indeed,

they afterwards seemed to me—and the question arose, was he a genuine envoy, was the writing on Maître Labori's card perchance a forgery, and what was the document in a sealed envelope which was to be handed to nobody but M. Zola himself? Well, said I at a guess, perhaps it is a copy of the Versailles judgment, and this is simply an impudent attempt to serve it.

Wareham still had Zola's note in his possession, and we resolved to go to town that evening to interview the messenger and extract from him some decisive proof of his *bona fides* before allowing matters to go any further.

The envoy's address was the Salisbury Hotel, Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, which I thought a curious one, being in the very centre of the London newspaper district; and all the way up to town my suspicions of having to do with a 'plant' steadily increased. It was quite ten o'clock when we reached the hotel, and on inquiring for our party we found that he had gone to bed.

'Well,' said Wareham, sharply, 'he must be roused. We must see him at once.'

I spoke to the same effect, and the hotel

servants looked rather surprised. I have an idea that they fancied we had come to arrest the man.

In about ten minutes he was brought downstairs. His appearance was most unprepossessing. He was very short, with a huge head and a remarkable shock of coal-black hair. Having hastily risen from bed, he had retained his pyjamas, but a long frock-coat hung nearly to his slippers, and in one hand he carried a pair of gloves, and in the other a huge eccentric silk hat of the true chimney-pot type. These were details, and one might have passed them over. But the man's face was sadly against him. He had the slyest eyes I have ever seen; that peculiar shifty glance which invariably sets one against an individual. And thus I became more and more convinced that we had to deal with some piece of trickery.

We entered the smoking-room where the gas was burning low. A gentleman stopping at the hotel was snoring in solitary state in one of the arm-chairs. Reaching a table near a window we sat down and at once engaged in battle.

'I have not brought you a definite answer,' said Wareham to the envoy, 'but this gentleman

is in M. Zola's confidence, and wishes further proof of your *bona fides* before allowing you to see M. Zola.'

Then I took up the tale, now in French, now in English, for the envoy spoke both languages. Who was he? I asked. Did he claim to have received Labori's card from Labori himself? What was the document in the envelope which he would only deliver to M. Zola in person? And he replied that he was a diamond-broker. Did I know So-and-So and So-and-So of Hatton Garden? They knew him well, they did business with him; they could vouch for his honorability. But no, I was not acquainted with So-and-So and So-and-So. I never bought diamonds. Besides, it was ten o'clock on Saturday night, and the parties mentioned were certainly not at their offices for me to refer to them.

Afterwards the little envoy began to speak of his family connections and his Paris friends, mentioning various well-known names. But the proofs I desired were not forthcoming; and when he finally admitted that he had not received Maître Labori's card from that gentleman himself, all my suspicions revived. True he added that it

had been given him by a well-known Revisionist leader to whom Maître Labori, in a moment of emergency, having nobody of his own whom he could send abroad, had handed it.

But what was in the envelope? That was the great question. The envoy could or would not answer it. He knew nothing certain on that point. Then we—Wareham and I—brought forward our heavy artillery. We could not allow a document to be handed to M. Zola under such mysterious conditions. We must see it. But no, the envoy had strict instructions to the contrary; he could not show it to us. In that case, we rejoined, he might take it back to Paris. He had produced no proof of any of his assertions; for all we knew he might have told us a fairy tale, and the mysterious document might simply be a copy of the much dreaded judgment of Versailles. This suggestion produced a visible impression on the little man, and for half an hour we sat arguing the point. Finally he began to compliment us: 'Oh! you guard him well!' he said. 'I shall tell them all about it when I get back to Paris. But you do wrong to distrust me; I am honourable. I am well known in Hatton Garden. I have done

business there, ten, twelve years with So-and-So and So-and-So. I speak the truth: you may believe me.'

We shrugged our shoulders. For my part, I could not shake off the bad impression which the envoy had made on me. The gleams of craft and triumph which now and again I had detected in his eyes were not to my liking. Assuredly few men are responsible for any physical repulsiveness; we cannot all be 'Belvedere' Apollos; but then the envoy was not only of the ugly, but also the cunning-looking class. Yet a more honourable man never breathed. He at last thrust one hand into the depths of a capacious inner pocket, produced the mysterious envelope, and opened it in our presence. It contained simply a long letter from Maître Labori, accompanied by a document concerning the prosecution which had been instituted with reference to the infamous articles that Ernest Judet, of the 'Petit Journal,' had recently written, accusing Zola's father of theft and embezzlement whilst he was a wardrobe officer in the French Foreign Legion in Algeria. It was needful that Zola should see this document, and return it by messenger to Paris immediately.

The affair in question is still *sub judice*, and I must therefore speak of it with some reticence. But all who are interested in M. Zola's origin and career will do well to read the admirable volume written by M. Jacques Dhur, and entitled 'Le Père d'Émile Zola,' which the Société Libre d'Édition des Gens de Lettres (30, Rue Laffitte, Paris) published a short time ago. This will show them how strong are the presumptions that the documents cited by Judet in proof of his abominable charges are rank forgeries—similar to those of Henry and Lemercier-Picard! In this connection it afforded me much pleasure to be able to supply certain extracts from Francesco Zola's works at the British Museum, showing how subsequent to the date at which the novelist's father is alleged to have purloined State money he was received with honour by King Louis-Philippe, the Prince de Joinville, the Minister of War, and other high personages of the time—incidents which all tend to establish the falsity of the accusations by which Judet, in his venomous spite and malignity, hoped to cast opprobrium on the parentage of my dear master and friend.

But I must return to Maître Labori's envoy.

When I had seen the contents of his envelope I heartily apologised to him for the suspicions which I had cast upon his good faith. At this he smiled more maliciously and triumphantly than ever, and then candidly remarked: 'Well, if you have tested me, I have tested you, and I shall be able to tell all our friends in Paris that M. Zola is in safe hands.'

According to previous agreement we re-sealed the envelope, writing across it that it had been opened in presence of Wareham and myself. And afterwards our reconciliation also was 'sealed' over a friendly glass. Nevertheless the envoy never saw M. Zola. M. Desmoulin luckily turned up on the morrow, and, armed with a fresh note from the master, persuaded our little French friend to hand him the documents.

We left the Salisbury Hotel, Wareham and I, well pleased to find that our suspicions had been unfounded. Nevertheless the whole conversation of the last hour had left its mark on us; and, for my part, I was in much the same state of mind as in the old days of the siege of Paris, when the spy mania led to so many amusing incidents. Thus the circumstance of finding two persons at the

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corner of Salisbury Square as we left it—two persons who were speaking in French and who eyed us very suspiciously—revived my alarm. They even followed us along Fleet Street towards Ludgate Circus, and though we dodged them through the cavernous Ludgate Hill Railway Station, across sundry courts and past the stores of Messrs. Spiers and Pond, we again found them waiting for us on our return towards the embankment, determined, so it seemed, to convoy us home. We hastened our steps and they hastened theirs. We loitered, they loitered also. At last Wareham made me dive into a side street and thence into a maze of courts, and though the others seemed bent on following us, we at last managed to give them the slip.

I never saw these men again, but I have retained a strong suspicion that no mere question of coincidence could explain that seeming pursuit. I take it that these individuals had come over to England on the track of the little French envoy; for it was after he had bidden us good-night outside the Salisbury Hotel that they had turned to follow us. He had told us, too, that earlier in the evening he had spent an hour smoking and strolling

about Salisbury Court whilst anxiously awaiting Wareham's arrival with his promised answer. Whether these men were French police spies, whether they were simply members of some swell mob who knew that the little gentleman with the huge head and the coal-black hair sometimes journeyed to London with a fortune in diamonds in his possession, must remain a mystery. As for Wareham and myself, when we had again reached Fleet Street we hailed a passing hansom and drove away to Waterloo.

VIII

OTHER PERSONAL ADVENTURES

I HAD another alarm a few days later. Returning one evening by train from Waterloo, I was followed into the compartment I selected by a party of five men, two of whom I recognised. One was the landlord of the Raynes Park Hotel, now deceased, and the other his son. Their companions proved to be Frenchmen, which somehow struck me as a curious circumstance. This was the time when a letter addressed by me to Paris for M. Zola appeared to have gone astray, and when we were therefore rather apprehensive of some action on the part of the French authorities. Could it be that the two Frenchmen who had followed me into the railway carriage in the company of a local licensed victualler were actually staying at Raynes Park, within half a mile of my home? And, if so, what could be their purpose?

I remained silent in my corner of the carriage, pretending to read a newspaper; but on glancing up every now and then I fancied that I detected one or another of the Frenchmen eyeing me suspiciously. They conversed in French, either together or with the landlord's son—who spoke their language, I found—on a variety of commonplace topics until we had passed Earlsfield and were fast approaching Wimbledon. Then, all at once, one of them inquired of the other: 'Shall we get out at Wimbledon or Raynes Park?'

'We'll see,' replied the other; and at the same time it seemed to me that he darted a very expressive glance in my direction.

I now began to feel rather nervous. It was my own intention to alight at Wimbledon, as I had an important message from M. Zola to communicate to Wareham that evening. But it now occurred to me that the best policy might be to go straight home. If these men were French detectives, or French newspaper men of the anti-Dreyfusite party, who by shadowing me hoped to discover M. Zola's retreat, it would be most unwise for me to go to Wareham's. If once the latter's name and address should be ascertained by detectives, communica-

tions between M. Zola and his friends would be jeopardised. On the other hand, of course, I might be mistaken with regard to the men; and before all else I ought to make sure whether they really had any hostile intentions. So I resolved to leave the train at Wimbledon, as I had originally proposed doing, and then shape my course by theirs.

As soon as the train pulled up I rose to alight, and at that same moment the Frenchman who had said 'We'll see,' exclaimed to his companion: 'Well, I think we will get out here.'

I waited to hear no more. I rushed off, threw my ticket to an inspector, climbed the steps from the platform, descended another flight into the station-yard, hurried into the Hill Road, and did not pause until I reached the first turning on the right. This happened to be the Alexandra Road, in which Wareham's local office is situated.

Then I turned round and, sure enough, I saw the two Frenchmen, the licensed victualler and his son, deliberately coming towards me. Forthwith, under cover of a passing vehicle, I crossed the street to the corner of St. George's Road, which offered a convenient, shady retreat. Then I awaited developments. To my great relief

the party of four went straight on up the Hill Road.

Nevertheless, this might only be a feint, and I hesitated about going to Wareham's immediately. Before anything, I had better let those suspicious Frenchmen get right away. So I retraced my steps towards the station, and entered the saloon bar of the South-Western Hotel. There I found a foreign gentleman, whether French or Italian I do not know, whom I had previously met about Wimbledon on various occasions. A short, rather stout, and elderly man, formerly, I believe, in business in London, and now living on his income, he had more than once spoken to me of the Dreyfus case, Zola, Esterhazy, and all the others. And on this particular evening he approached me with a smile, and inquired if there were any truth in the reports he had heard to the effect that M. Zola had lately been seen in Wimbledon.

Nervous as I was at that moment, I was about to give him a sharp reply, when the door of the saloon bar opened, and to my intense alarm in marched the two Frenchmen who had already inspired me with so much distrust. Their friends were behind them; and I could only conclude that

my movements had somehow been observed by them, and that now I was virtually caught, like a rat in a trap.

I was the more startled, too, when my foreign acquaintance (about whom I really knew very little) abruptly quitted me to accost the new comers. But this gave me breathing time. The door was free, and so, leaving the refreshment I had ordered untouched, I bolted out of the house in much the same way as a thief might have done, and ran, as if for my life, right down the Alexandra Road until I reached Wareham's office. And there I seized the knocker in a frenzy, and made such a racket as might have awakened the dead. The door suddenly opened, and I fell into the arms of Everson, Wareham's managing clerk.

'Great Scott!' said he. 'What is the matter? You've nearly brought the house down!'

'Shut the door!' I replied. 'Shut the door!'

'But what has happened to you?'

'Shut the door!'

I had seated myself on the stairs, and a full minute went by before I could begin my story. Then I told Everson all that had befallen me. Some Frenchmen were on Zola's track; they must

be the very same men who had shadowed Wareham and myself from the Salisbury Hotel some nights previously; and now they were in Wimbledon, having heard, no doubt, that M. Zola had been seen there. Wareham must be warned of it. Every precaution must be taken; we must remove our charge from Oatlands, and so forth.

Everson puffed away at his pipe and listened meditatively. At last he remarked, 'Well, it is a curious business if what you say is true. What were these Frenchmen like?'

Forthwith I began to describe them as accurately as I could. The first likeness I sketched must have been a faithful one, for Everson started, and exclaimed, 'And the other. Was he not so-and-so and so-and-so?'

'Yes, he was. But how do you know that?' I rejoined, with considerable surprise.

'Why, because I know who the men are! Although you saw them with Mr. Savage of the Raynes Park Hotel, it doesn't follow that they are staying at Raynes Park. As a matter of fact they live here in this very road. They have been here I daresay, eight or nine months now. And as for being detectives, my dear sir, they are musicians!'

'You don't mean it!'

I collapsed again. To think that out of a mere chain of chance coincidences I should have forged a perfect melodramatic intrigue! To think that I should have let my fancy run away with me in such a fashion, and have worked myself into a state of nervousness and alarm! I could not help feeling a trifle ashamed. 'Well,' I pleaded, 'for my part, I had never seen the men before, either in Wimbledon or elsewhere. Of course, I am short-sighted, and my eyes sometimes play me tricks; however, as you are sure——'

'Sure!' repeated Everson; and again he described the men in such a way as to convince me that there was no mistake in the matter. 'Moreover,' he added, 'I saw them go past the house this very morning when they went up to town.'

'Well,' I rejoined, 'I suppose I am losing my head. Ten minutes ago I could have sworn that those men were after me.'

'Your statement that you never saw them before,' said Everson, 'does not surprise me. As a rule they go to town every morning, and as you are seldom in Wimbledon in the evening you can't very well meet one another.'

'I suppose you regard me as a bit of a fool?' I inquired.

'Oh, no. The circumstances were curious enough, and in your place I might have drawn the same conclusions. Only I don't think I should have hurried off to a friend's house and have nearly "knocked" it down.'

We both laughed, and then I apologised.

'As a matter of fact,' said I, 'all this is the natural outcome of events. The beginning was long ago. I have a secret which I find haunting me when I get up in the morning; all day long it occupies my mind; at night it clings to me and follows me through my sleep. And I grow more and more suspicious; it seems as if everybody I meet has designs upon my secret. Every Frenchman I don't know is a detective or a process server with a copy of the Versailles judgment in his pockets. And thus I shall soon become a monomaniac if I do not discover some remedy. I think I shall try the shower-bath system.'

Then I recalled experiences dating from long prior to M. Zola's arrival in England. First mysterious offers of important documents bearing on the Dreyfus case—documents forged à la

Lemercier-Picard, hawked about by adventurers who tried to dispose of them, now in Paris, now in Brussels, and now in London. Needless to say that I, like others, had rejected them with contempt. Then had come an incident that Everson already knew of: a stranger with divers aliases beseeching me for private interviews in M. Zola's interest, a request which I ultimately granted, and which led to a rather curious experience. I had declined to see my correspondent alone, and had given him the address of Wareham, who had been present at the interview. And at first the stranger, a tall and energetic looking man, with sunburnt face and heavy moustaches, had refused to disclose his business in Wareham's presence. If at last he did so, it was solely because I told him that before coming to any decision in the matters which he might have to submit to me I should certainly lay them before my solicitor. So the result would be the same, whether he spoke out before Wareham or not. And Wareham very properly added that a solicitor was, in a measure, a confessor bound to observe professional secrecy.

At last the man told us his business, and it proved to be a scheme for rescuing Dreyfus from

Devil's Island and carrying him to an American port. Neither Wareham nor myself was able to take the matter seriously, but our visitor spoke with great earnestness, as though he already saw the suggested feat accomplished. He had a ship at his disposal, and a crew also. He gave particulars about both. If I remember rightly, the ship lay at Bristol. He knew Cayenne and Devil's Island, and Royal Island, and so forth. He was convinced of the practicability of the venture, he had weighed all the *pros* and *cons*, and it rested with Dreyfus's friends and relatives to decide whether or no he (the prisoner) should be a free man within another six weeks.

Wareham laughed. He was thinking of 'Captain Kettle,' and said so. But the would-be rescuer protested that all this was no romancing. Oh! he was not a philanthropist, he should expect to be well paid for his services; but the Dreyfus family was rich, and M. Zola, too, was a man of means. So surely they would not begrudge the necessary funds to release the unhappy prisoner from bondage!

But I replied that though the Dreyfus family and M. Zola also were anxious to see Dreyfus

free, they were yet more anxious to prove his innocence. Personally I knew nothing of the Dreyfus family, and could give no letter of introduction to any member of it, such as I was asked for. And, as regards M. Zola, I was sufficiently acquainted with his character to say that he would never join in any such enterprise. He intended to pursue his campaign by legal means alone, and it was useless to refer the matter to him.

Then the interview ended rather abruptly. A French client of Wareham's happened to call at that very moment, and was heard speaking in French in the hall. This seemed to alarm the stranger, who ceased pressing his request that I should give him letters of introduction to prominent Dreyfusites. He rose abruptly, saying that the time would come when we should probably regret having refused to entertain his proposals, and hurrying past the waiting French client he ran off down the Alexandra Road in much the same way as I myself subsequently ran off from the French 'detectives' who were simply harmless disciples of St. Cecilia.

To this day I do not know whether the man was a lunatic, an impostor seeking money, or an

agent provocateur, that is, one who imagined that he might through me inveigle M. Zola into an illegal act which would lead to prosecution and imprisonment. The last-mentioned status that I have ascribed to my interviewer is by no means an impossible one, considering the many dastardly attempts made to discredit and ruin M. Zola. And yet, suspicious and abrupt as was the man's leave-taking when he heard French being spoken outside Wareham's private room (where the interview took place), I nowadays think it more charitable to assume that he was a trifle crazy. One thing is certain, he had come to the wrong person in applying to me to aid and abet him in the foolhardy enterprise he spoke of.

This is the first time I have told this anecdote in any detail; but at the period when the incident occurred I spoke of it casually to a few friends, to which circumstance I am inclined to attribute the earlier paragraphs which appeared in the newspapers about American schemes for delivering Dreyfus. The person whom I saw was, I believe, a German-American.

Well, this incident, preposterous as it may appear (but truth, remember, is quite as fantastic

as fiction), had proved another link in the chain of suspicious occurrences in which I had been mixed up prior to M. Zola's exile. Other curious little incidents had followed, and thus for many months I had been living—even as we lived long ago in besieged Paris—in distrust of all strangers, and the climax had come with my foolish fears respecting a couple of French musicians. The story I have told goes against me, but the man who cannot tell a story against himself when he thinks it a good one can have, I think, little grit in his composition.

From the time of my adventure with the French musicians I steeled myself against excessive fears whilst remaining duly vigilant. On one point I was still anxious, which was that M. Zola should be able to settle down in a convenient retreat where he himself would enjoy all necessary quietude; whilst we, Wareham and I, knowing him to be well screened from his enemies, would be less liable to those 'excursions and alarums' which had hitherto troubled us. As the next chapter will show, this consummation was near at hand.

IX

A QUIET HOME AND A HAUNTED HOUSE

IT was M. Zola himself who, after some stay at Oatlands, discovered, in the course of his excursions with M. Desmoulin, a retreat to his liking. It was a house in that part of Surrey belonging to a city merchant, who was willing to let it furnished for a limited period. The owner met M. Zola on various occasions and showed himself both courteous and discreet.

The details of the 'letting' were arranged between him and Mr. Wareham; and my wife hastily procured servants for the new establishment. These servants, however, did not speak French, and I settled with M. Zola that my eldest daughter, Violette, should stay with him to act in some measure as his housekeeper and interpreter. This was thrusting a young girl, not quite sixteen, into a position of considerable responsibility, but I thought that Violette would be equal to the task,

provided she followed the instructions and advice of her mother; and as she was then at home for the summer holidays she was sent down to M. Zola's without more ado.

I shall have occasion to speak of her hereafter in some detail, in connection with a very curious incident which marked M. Zola's exile. Here I will merely mention that a Parisienne by birth and speaking French from her infancy, it was easy for her to understand and explain the master's requirements.

Like M. Zola, she was provided with a bicycle, and the pair of them occasionally spent an afternoon speeding along leafy Surrey lanes and visiting quaint old villages. The mornings, however, were devoted to work, for it was now that M. Zola started on his novel, 'Fécondité,' the first of a series of four volumes, which will be, he considers, his literary testament.

These books, indeed, are to embody what he regards as the four cardinal principles of human life. First Fruitfulness, as opposed to neo-Malthusianism, which he holds to be the most pernicious of all doctrines; next Work, as opposed to the idleness of the drones, whom he would sweep away

from the human community; then Truth, as opposed to falsehood, hypocrisy, and convention; and, finally, Justice to one and all, in lieu of charity to some, oppression to others, and favours for the privileged few.

All four books—'Fruitfulness,' 'Work,' 'Truth,' and 'Justice'—are to be stories; for years ago M. Zola arrived at the conclusion that mere essays on sociology, though they may work good in time among people of culture, fail to reach and impress the masses in the same way as a story may do. It is, I take it, largely on this account that Émile Zola has become a novelist. He has certainly written essays, but he knows how inconsiderable have been their sales in comparison with those of his works embodying precisely the same principles, but placed before the world in the form of novels. To criticise him as a mere story-teller is arrant absurdity.

He himself put the whole case in a nutshell when he remarked, 'My novels have always been written with a higher aim than merely to amuse. I have so high an opinion of the novel as a means of expression that I have chosen it as the form in which to present to the world what I wish to say

on the social, scientific, and psychological problems that occupy the minds of thinking men. I might have said what I wanted to say to the world in another form. But the novel has to-day risen from the place which it held in the last century at the banquet of letters. It was then the idle pastime of the hour, and sat low down between the fable and the idyll. To-day it contains, or may be made to contain, everything; and it is because that is my creed that I am a novelist. I have, to my thinking, certain contributions to make to the thought of the world on certain subjects, and I have chosen the novel as the best means of communicating these contributions to the world.'

If critics in reviewing one or another of M. Zola's books would only bear these declarations of the author in mind, the reading public would often be spared many irrelevant and foolish remarks.

M. Zola's device is *Nulla dies sine linea*, and even before the materials for 'Fécondité' were brought to him from France he had given an hour or two each day to the penning of notes and impressions for subsequent use. With the arrival of his books and memoranda, work began in a more systematic way. At half-past eight every morning

he partook of a cup of coffee and a roll and butter, no more, and shortly after nine he was at his table in a small room overlooking the garden of the house he had rented. And there he remained regularly, hard at work, until the luncheon hour, covering sheet after sheet of quarto paper with serried lines of his firm, characteristic handwriting.

M. Zola has retained possession of the MSS. of almost every work written by him, and I know that these MSS. often differ largely from the books actually given to the world. The 'copy' is not only extremely clear, but remarkably free from erasures and interpolations. But when his first proofs reach him M. Zola revises them with the greatest care. He will strike out whole passages in the most drastic manner, and alter others until they are almost unrecognisable.

He will even at the last moment change some character's name, and I know all the inconvenience that arises on certain occasions from having had to prepare portions of my translations from first proofs, through lack of time to wait for the corrected matter.

This was notably the case with my version of 'Paris.' While that work was passing through the

Press M. Zola was already in all the throes of the Dreyfus affair, and somehow, as he has acknowledged to me with regret, he forgot to tell me that at the last moment he had changed the names of several personages in the story. Thus Duthil (as originally written and given in my translation) became Dutheil in the French book; Sagnier was changed to Sanier; the Princess de Horn was renamed Harn and finally Harth, and young Lord George Eliott became Elson.

Of course some of the reviewers of my translation attacked me virulently for my unwarrantable presumption in changing the very names of M. Zola's characters; they were unaware that the names given by me were those first selected by the author, who had afterwards altered them and forgotten to tell me of it.

Coming back to 'Fécondité,' I should say that M. Zola wrote an average of three pages per day of that book during his exile in England. Work ceased at the luncheon hour, as I have said, and consequently he could dispose of his afternoons.

But it will be remembered that the summer of 1898 was exceptionally hot, so hot indeed that M. Zola, though many years of his childhood were

spent under the scorching sun of Provence, found a siesta absolutely necessary after the midday meal. It was only later that he ventured out on foot or on his bicycle, often taking his hand camera with him.

At some distance from the house where he was residing, in the midst of large deserted grounds, overrun with grass and weeds, there stood a mournful-looking, unoccupied private residence of some architectural pretensions, on the building of which a considerable sum had evidently been expended. The place took M. Zola's fancy the first time he passed it on his bicycle. The iron entrance gate was broken, and he was able to enter the garden and peep through the ground-floor windows.

All spoke of decay and abandonment; and when, through my daughter, M. Zola began to make inquiries about the place, he was told a fantastic tragic story. A murder, it was said, had been committed there many years previously; a poor little girl had been killed by her stepmother, and her remains had been buried beneath a scullery floor.

There was also talk of the child's father, who at

night drove up to the house in a phantom carriage drawn by ghostly horses, and hammered at the door of the mansion and shouted aloud for his dead child!

The story was alleged to be well known, and it was said that not a girl from Chertsey to Esher, from Walton to Byfleet, would have dared to pass that house after nightfall, when harrowing voices rang out through the trees, and the shadowy horses of the ghostly carriage trotted swiftly and silently over the gravel.

The story not only impressed my daughter Violette, but it greatly interested M. Zola, on whose behalf I made various inquiries. For instance, I closely questioned an old gardener who had known the district for long years. All he could tell me, however, was that there were certainly some strange rumours abroad among the womenfolk, but that for his own part he had never heard of any crime and had never seen any ghost.

And at last others told me quite a different story of the house's abandonment, and this I here venture to give, though I certainly cannot vouch for its accuracy. The place had been built, it seemed, some forty years previously by a retired and

wealthy London pawnbroker, a gaunt, shrivelled old man, who, mounted on a white mare, had in his declining years been a familiar figure on the roads of the district.

Extremely eccentric, he had largely furnished and decorated the house with unredeemed articles that had been pledged with him. There was nothing *en suite*. Old chairs of divers patterns were mingled with odd tables and sideboards and sofas; there were also innumerable daubs 'ascribed' to old masters, and a wonderful display of Wardour-street *bric-à-brac*. But, indeed, one has only to look at an average pawnbroker's shop to picture what kind of articles the house must have contained.

It seems that the old fellow in question had three daughters, whom he kept more or less imprisoned on his recently-acquired property, though they were charming girls well worthy of being sought in marriage; and the story I heard was that three officers sojourning in the district had one day espied the three forlorn damsels over the garden hedge, and had forthwith begun to court them, much to the ire of the misanthropic, retired pawnbroker. That stern old gentleman ordered

his daughters into the house, and there kept them in stricter confinement than ever.

But love laughs at locksmiths, and the amorous officers eventually carried the place by storm, and beat down all parental resistance. Three weddings followed on the same day, and all ended for a time as in a fairy tale. But the old pawnbroker subsequently married again to relieve his solitude, and after his death his will was attacked, and an interminable lawsuit ensued, with the result that the property was left unoccupied. Now, it appeared, it was for sale, and before long would probably be cut up into building plots.

Whatever romantic element there might be in the story of the pawnbroker and his daughters, M. Zola much preferred the popular and gruesome legend of the little girl murdered in the scullery; and, some time later, when he consented to write a short story for 'The Star,' it was this legend which he took as his basis, building thereon the pathetic sketch of 'Angeline,' the scene of which he transferred to France.

He has stated in his article 'Justice,' published in Paris on his return from exile, that during most of the time he spent in England he was virtually

in a desert. There were people about him of course; but he retired into himself as it were, communing with his own thoughts, and seeking no intercourse with strangers. This is true of the period to which I am now referring. Still he did not complain of solitude. In fact he knew that quiet was essential for his work. Only once or twice did anything happen of a nature to cause any anxiety. Neither Wareham nor myself was much troubled at this period; there was a lull even in the periodical visits with which gentlemen of the Press kindly favoured me.

Still we had taken our precautions by admitting a mutual friend, Mr. A. W. Pamplin, into our confidence. If M. Zola's communications with Paris, through Wareham and myself, should be threatened, Mr. Pamplin was to take upon himself the duty of re-establishing them.

At M. Zola's house there was, so far as I am aware, but one brief *alerte*. This occurred one afternoon, when a servant came to my daughter with the tidings that there was a French hunchback at the door. Violette impulsively rushed off to tell M. Zola of it; but when in her turn she went to the door to see who the person might be,

she found that he was an Englishman, a traveller for some county directory, who had merely performed his legitimate work in requesting to know the name of the occupier of the house. Of course the only name given was that of the owner, then absent at the seaside.

Thus the hot days sped by peacefully enough. M. Zola had at least found occupation and quietude, though it was naturally impossible that he should feel content with his lot. Each day brought more and more home to him the consciousness that he was in exile, and that contumely had been his reward for seeking to save France from the shame of a great crime.

I have previously mentioned that during the first week or so of his sojourn in England he had refused to look at newspapers and—at least so it seemed to me—had sought to banish the Dreyfus affair and his own troubles from his mind, much as one might seek to drive away a hateful nightmare. But before long he again fell under the spell and followed the course of events with the keenest interest. And again and again, reading of the great battle being waged in France, he longed to return home, and grew restless and impatient.

Moreover a complaint from which he has suffered on and off for some years troubled him on more than one occasion. He always rallied, however, and returned to his work with renewed energy. 'Fécondité' was already taking shape in the leafy solitude in which he dwelt. And undoubtedly the steady task of creation, resumed morning by morning, greatly helped him to quiet the anguish of heart which the course of events in France would otherwise have rendered intolerable.

NOTE.—While this work was appearing serially in the 'Evening News' I received numerous letters from readers interested in various matters mentioned by me. With respect to the foregoing chapter, a lady living at Staines wrote saying that she was looking out for 'a cheap haunted house,' and asking for the address of the one I had mentioned. I was unable to comply with her request, as personally I do not believe the house was haunted at all. Moreover, to prevent the sale or letting of any particular house by asserting it to be haunted would be an offence under the libel laws. As I could not tell what course my lady-correspondent might take in the matter, I preferred not to answer her. May she forgive me my impoliteness!

X

'LE REVE': THE DREAM

WHEN the owner of the house which M. Zola had rented desired to resume possession, it became necessary to find new quarters of a similar character for the master. And so he was transferred to another Surrey country house where the arrangements remained much the same as previously: work every morning, and resting or bicycling in the afternoon, followed by newspaper reading and letter-writing in the evening.

The grounds of M. Zola's new retreat were very extensive, and in part very shady, which last circumstance proved extremely welcome to the novelist, who on coming to 'cold, damp, foggy England,' as the French put it, had never imagined that he would have to endure a temperature approaching that of the tropics.

The heat deprived him of appetite, and, more-

over, he did not particularly relish some of the dishes provided for him by a new cook who had lately been engaged. We all know how great is the servant difficulty even under the best of circumstances; and when cooks and maids have to be secured in hot haste an entirely satisfactory result is hardly to be expected. Moreover, many servants refuse to live in country retirement, far away from their 'followers,' and thus one has at times to take such as one can find.

As for the cookery to which M. Zola was at certain periods treated, he beheld it with wonder and repulsion. His tastes are simple, but to him the plain, boiled, watery potato and the equally watery greens were abominations. Plum tart, though served hot (why not cold, like the French *tarte?*) might be more or less eatable; but, surely, apple pudding—the inveterate breeder of indigestion—was the invention of a savage race. And why, when a prime steak was grilled, should the cook water it in order to produce 'gravy,' instead of applying to it a little butter and chopped parsley? This, Dundreary-wise, was one of those things which nobody, not even M. Zola, could understand.

However, a visit to a fishmonger's shop had made him acquainted with the haddock, the kipper, and likewise the humble bloater; and occasionally, I believe, when his appetite needed a stimulant he turned to the smoked fish, which seemed so novel to his palate. The cook, of course, was mightily incensed thereat. For her part, she most certainly would not eat haddock or kippers for dinner; she had too much self-respect to do such a thing, so she boiled or roasted a leg of mutton for her own repast and the maids'. I do not say that she was wrong; and, indeed, M. Zola never forced people to eat what they did not care for.

But in the same way he wished for something that he himself could eat, and he was weary of the perpetual joint and the vegetables *à l'eau*. One day, when in a jocular spirit he was talking to me on this subject, I told him that we English had a saying to the effect that 'God sent us food, but the devil invented cooks."

'You are quite right,' he replied, 'only as a Frenchman I should put it this way: "God sent us food, but the devil invented English cooks."'

Towards the end of August he again became very dispirited. The 'cause' did not at that time

appear to be prospering in France, where so many people remained under the spell of the deceptive declarations and documents which had been made public in the Chamber of Deputies by War Minister Cavaignac early in July.

Of course the Revisionists were still hard at work, but in the face of M. Cavaignac's speech, placarded throughout the 36,000 townships of France, they seemed to have a very uphill task before them. The anti-Dreyfusites on their side were more arrogant than ever, and although M. Zola never once lost faith in the justice of his cause and its ultimate triumph, he did, on more than one occasion, question whether that triumph would come in a peaceful way.

Félix Faure was then still President of the Republic, and I am abusing, I think, no confidence in saying that M. Zola regarded that vain, showy man as one of the great obstacles to the victory of truth and justice. Faure, he said to me, had undoubtedly at one time enjoyed well-deserved popularity; he, Zola, had been received by him and in the most cordial manner. But the President's intercourse with crowned heads, and his intimacy with arrogant general officers, coupled

with all the flummery of the Protocole, all the pomp and display observed whenever he stirred from the Palace of the Elysée, had virtually turned his head. He was in the hands of those military men who opposed revision, and he shielded them because their downfall would mean his own. He was bent on the hushing-up course lest his Presidency should become synonymous with a great judicial crime; he feared that he might be forced to resign even before his term of office was over, or, at all events, that he might have to abandon all hope of re-election.

And thus with the President and the more prominent generals opposed to revision, M. Zola, though confident in the final issue, more than once said to me that there might be serious trouble before all was over.

He was now kept very well informed of all that took place in France; intelligence often reached him before it appeared in the newspapers; and now and again he told me what was brewing. Going backward, too, he confided to me some curious particulars of the genesis of the Revisionist campaign. But he will himself some day tell all this in a book of his own, and I must not anticipate

him. I will only say that various important things he mentioned to me in the autumn of 1898 have since become well-known, acknowledged facts, and I have every reason to believe that time will duly show the accuracy of those which have not as yet been publicly revealed.

There is one point to which I must refer at more length. In his declaration 'Justice,' published on the expiration of his exile, M. Zola stated that he had long suspected Colonel Henry, though he had possessed no actual proof of that officer's guilt. This is so true, that I well recollect listening to a conversation between him and M. Desmoulin during the first days of their sojourn in England, when they compared notes with respect to their impressions of Henry, whom they had particularly noticed at Versailles on the occasion of M. Zola's sentence by default.

They had then observed how nervous and crestfallen the colonel looked—the very picture, indeed, of a man who dreads the discovery of his guilt. This was the more remarkable, as Henry's confident arrogance at the earlier trial in Paris had been so conspicuous. The man had a skeleton in

his cupboard—to Zola and Desmoulin that was certain.

M. Zola is a good physiognomist, and his friend (as a portraitist) is scarcely less gifted in that respect, and they felt equally certain of Henry's culpability. As yet they could not say that it was he who had actually forged that famous 'absolute proof' of Dreyfus's guilt, which they knew to have been forged by some one, but that time would prove him guilty of some abominable machination was to them a foregone conclusion.

One day, it must have been I suppose the 31st of August, a rather strange telegram in French reached me for transmission to M. Zola. It came from Paris, and was, so far as I remember, to this effect: 'Be prepared for a great success.'

A name I was acquainted with followed; but what the telegram might mean I knew not. There was absolutely nothing in the newspapers with reference to any great success achieved at that moment by the Revisionist party; but possibly the message might refer to one or another of M. Zola's lawsuits, such as that with the 'Petit Journal' or that with the handwriting experts. I

re-telegraphed it to M. Zola, and that day, at all events, I thought no more of the matter.

But I afterwards learnt that the telegram had perplexed him quite as much as it perplexed me. A great success? What could it be? He racked his mind in vain. He reviewed all the phases and aspects of the Dreyfus case, wondering whether this or that had happened, but not suspecting the public revelations which were then impending, the tragedy which was being enacted.

For a while he walked up and down, feverish and anxious (he was at the time in poor health), and then he would fling himself on a sofa, still and ever indulging in his surmises. With that kind of prescience which he had so frequently displayed in the Dreyfus affair, he felt certain that something very important had occurred, for otherwise such a mysterious telegram would never have been sent him. This lasted the whole evening.

My daughter Violette was with him at the time, and his feverishness doubtless gained on her. At last she retired to rest, while M. Zola, according to his wont, carried a lamp into his own room to

sit there awhile and read some French newspapers which had reached him, *viâ* Wareham, by the evening delivery. There was nothing in them of a nature to explain the mysterious telegram; still he read on and on in the hope, as it were, of quieting himself.

It was, I believe, between eleven o'clock and midnight when he rose to go to bed, and as he did so he heard some loud exclamations, followed by a cry. At first he fancied that the calls came from one of the servants' rooms, and he paused on the landing. Then, however, as they were repeated, he found that they came from my daughter's apartment. With fatherly solicitude he waited and listened. Violette was calling in her sleep.

Practical enough in matters of everyday life, this girl of mine has literary partialities of a somewhat gruesome kind, and her avowed ambition (I quote her own words) is to write, some day, stories full of witches and wizards, that shall make people's flesh creep. For this reason I keep such of Anne Radcliffe's uncanny novels as I possess carefully locked up.

I can well remember my daughter telling me at times of strange things dreamt by her in her sleep;

but not being of a romantic or a mystical turn myself, I have usually pooh-poohed all this as nonsense. And such I believe is the course which fathers usually adopt if their daughters' imaginations begin to run riot.

As for M. Zola, when he heard Violette calling in her sleep, his first impulse was to rouse her, but all suddenly became still again. The girl had probably sunk into more peaceful slumber. And so, after waiting a few minutes longer, he thought it best to leave her as she was.

Nothing further disturbed M. Zola that night; but on the following morning, when he met Violette downstairs, he asked her how she felt, and told her that he had heard her calling in her sleep. He had probably formed the same opinion as I should have formed under the circumstances, namely, that it was a case of indigestion or a little excitement.

But she turned to him and replied, 'Oh! I had such a frightful dream. . . . I was in a big black place, and there was a man on the ground covered with blood, and people were crowding round him, talking with great excitement. And I saw you, Monsieur Zola, and you came up looking

VIOLETTE VIZETELLY

like a giant and waved your arms again and again, and seemed well pleased.'

M. Zola was dumbfounded. He could make nothing of it. A man in a pool of blood and others round him; and he, Zola, waving his arms and looking well pleased! It was nonsense; and he was disposed to laugh at the girl and chide her. But a little later, with the arrival of some morning newspapers, the position suddenly changed.

Here I should mention that as the Paris journals only reached M. Zola with a delay of twelve or four-and-twenty hours, it had just been arranged that he should be supplied with two or three London papers every morning, and that he and Violette between them should put the telegrams concerning the Dreyfus business into French.

He opened one of these English newspapers—which it was I do not recollect—and there he saw a whole column dealing with the arrest and confession of Colonel Henry. The heading to the telegrams, the very words 'arrest' and 'confession,' made everything intelligible to M. Zola; and beneath all this came a brief wire headed, I think, 'Paris, midnight,' and worded much to this effect:

'Colonel Henry has been found dead in his cell at Mont Valérien.'

So that was the man whom Violette, in her dream, had seen weltering in a pool of blood, surrounded by his custodians, who had rushed in full of excitement! M. Zola's presence in that vision was, so to say, symbolical. 'He had waved his arms and had seemed well pleased'—so the girl had put it in her frank, artless way. 'Well pleased' may perhaps appear to be scarcely the correct expression. At all events, it needs to be interpreted. Most certainly Zola never desired the death of a sinner; but, on the other hand, he could only feel some satisfaction at knowing that Henry's crime was at last divulged to the world.

This, then, is how my daughter dreamt Henry's death. I do not wish to insist unduly on the incident, and I have no intention of appealing to the Psychical Research Society to test, corroborate, or disprove the case.

There was one rather curious feature that I have not yet mentioned. My daughter has assured me that during that same night she dreamt the same thing over and over again. She tried to

banish the vision, but ever and ever it returned, as if to impress itself indelibly upon her mind. And ever did she see M. Zola waving his arms as he hovered round the scene.

At that time the girl knew nothing of Colonel Henry; she understood very little about the Dreyfus case; and all she had to go upon was the enigmatical telegram and M. Zola's talk during the evening, when he was expressing his thoughts aloud. But at that moment he had foreseen no death, murder, or suicide, and if the possibility of any arrest had occurred to him it was that of M. du Paty de Clam, which the Revisionist papers were then demanding.

It is true that in infancy my daughter had often seen Mont Valérien, as I lived for some years at Boulogne-sur-Seine, and the hill and fortress towering across the river were then familiar objects to us all. But the girl was little more than a baby at the time, and so this circumstance can have exercised no influence upon her. Moreover, she has told me that she had no notion as to what might be the actual scene of her dream; it merely appeared to her that she was in France, because the people she saw raised ejaculations in French.

Passing from this incident, I may point out that the telegram sent to M. Zola through me was explained by the news in the English newspapers. It was evident that the 'great success' referred to in the message was the discovery of Henry's forgery and possibly his arrest.

Directly I saw the news in a London newspaper I hurried off to M. Zola's, and when I reached his abode about noon I found him expecting me. We then went over matters together, the press telegrams, my daughter's dream, and the probable outcome of the whole affair.

As was natural, M. Zola was quite excited. First, the document which Henry had confessed to having forged was the very one that General de Pellieux had imported into the Zola trial in Paris as convincing proof of Dreyfus's guilt. At that time already its effect had been very great; it had destroyed all chance of M. Zola's acquittal. Then, too, it had been solemnly brought forward in the Chamber of Deputies by War Minister Cavaignac, who had vouched for its authenticity. And now, as previously alleged by Colonel Picquart, it was shown to be a forgery of the clumsiest kind.

Here at least was 'a new fact' warranting the revision of the whole Dreyfus case. Surely the blindest bigot could not resist such evidence of the machinations of those who had sent Dreyfus to Devil's Island; truth and justice would speedily triumph, and in a week or two he, Zola, would be able to return to France again.

But he did not take sufficient account of human obstinacy and vileness. His friends, to whom he appealed on the subject of his return, urged him to remain where he was, for the battle, they said, was by no means over, and his name was still like the red scarf of the matador that goads the bull to fury. The advice proved good, for again were passions stirred. Henry, the ignoble forger, was raised to the position of a martyr, and Cavaignac and Zurlinden and Chanoine in turn strove to impede the course of justice. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' and thus M. Zola, finding so many difficulties in the way of his return, abandoned for a time all work and fell into brooding melancholy.

CHAPTER XI

THROUGH THE AUTUMN

IMPORTANT events were now taking place in Paris. Cavaignac resigned the position of War Minister and was succeeded by Zurlinden; Du Paty de Clam was turned out of the army; Esterhazy, who had likewise been 'retired,' fled from France; Mme. Dreyfus addressed to the Minister of Justice a formal application for the revision of her unfortunate husband's case; and that application was in the first instance referred to a Commission of judges and functionaries. Then General Zurlinden resigned his Ministerial office, and again becoming Governor of Paris, apprehended the gallant Picquart on a ridiculous charge of forgery, and cast him into close confinement in a military prison. There was talk, too, of a military plot in Paris, and again and again were attempts made to prevent the granting of Revision.

Throughout those days of alternate hope and fear M. Zola suffered keenly. It was, too, about this time that he heard of the death of his favourite dog—an incident to which I have previously referred as coming like a blow of fate in the midst of all his anxiety.

When he rallied he spoke to me of his desire to familiarise himself in some degree with the English language, with the object principally of arriving at a more accurate understanding of the telegrams from Paris which he found in the London newspapers. A dictionary, a conversation manual, and an English grammar for French students were then obtained; and whenever he felt that he needed a little relaxation, he took up one or another of these books and read them, as he put it to me, 'from a philosophical point of view.'

Later I procured him a set of Messrs. Nelson's 'Royal Readers' for children, which he greatly praised, declaring them to be much superior to the similar class of work current in France. Afterwards he himself purchased a prettily illustrated edition of the classic 'Vicar of Wakefield' (the work to which all French young ladies are put when learning our language), but he found

portions difficult to understand, and a French friend then procured him an edition in which the text is printed in French and English on alternate pages.

One day when he had been dipping into English papers and books he tackled me on rather a curious point. 'Why is it,' said he, 'that the Englishman when he writes of himself should invariably use a capital letter? That tall "I" which recurs so often in a personal narrative strikes me as being very arrogant. A Frenchman, referring to himself, writes *je* with a small *j*; a German, though he may gratify all his substantives with capital letters, employs a small *i* in writing *ich*; a Spaniard, when he uses the personal pronoun at all, bestows a small *y* on his *yo*, while he honours the person he addresses with a capital *V*. I believe, indeed—though I am not sufficiently acquainted with foreign languages to speak with certainty on the point—that the Englishman is the only person in the world who applies a capital letter to himself. That "I" strikes me as the triumph of egotism. It is tall, commanding, and so brief! "I"—and that suffices. How did it originate?'

It was difficult for me to answer M. Zola on the

point; I am a very poor scholar in such a matter, and I could find nothing on the subject in any work of reference I had by me. I surmised, however, that the capital I, as a personal pronoun, was a survival of the time when English, whether written or printed, was studded with capitals, even as German is to-day. If I am wrong, perhaps some one who knows better will correct me. One thing I have often noticed is that a child's first impulse is to write 'i,' and that it is only after admonition that the aggressive and egotistical 'I' supplants the humbler form of the letter. This did not surprise M. Zola, since vanity, like most other vices, is acquired, not inherent in our natures. But in a chaffing way he suggested that one might write a very humorous essay on the English character by taking as one's text that tall, stiff, and self-assertive letter 'I.'

How far M. Zola actually carried his study of English I could hardly say, but during the last months of his exile he more than once astonished me by his knowledge of an irregular verb or of the correct comparative and superlative of an adjective. And if he seldom attempted to speak English, he at least made considerable progress in

reading it. By the time he returned to France he could always understand any Dreyfus news in the English papers. Of course the language in which the news was couched was of great help to him, as in three instances out of four it was simply direct translation from the French.

In this connection, while praising many features of the English Press, M. Zola more than once expressed to me his surprise that so much of the Paris news printed in London should be simply taken from Paris journals. Some correspondents, said he, never seemed to go anywhere or to see anybody themselves. They purely and simply extracted everything from newspapers. This he was able to check by means of the many Paris prints which he received regularly.

'Here,' he would say, 'this paragraph is taken verbatim from "Le Figaro"; this other appeared in "Le Temps," this other in "Le Siècle,"' and so forth. And he was not alluding to extracts from editorials, but to descriptive matter—accounts of demonstrations and ceremonies, fashionable weddings and other social functions, interviews, and so forth. The practice upset all his ideas of a foreign correspondent's duties, which should be

to obtain first-hand and not second-hand information.

In principle this is of course correct, but a correspondent cannot be everywhere at the same time; and nowadays, moreover, English journalists in Paris do not enjoy quite the same facilities as formerly. As regards more particularly the Dreyfus business, the French, with a sensitiveness that can be understood, have all along deprecated anything in the way of foreign interference, and the English Pressman of inquiring mind on the subject has more than once met with a rebuff from those in a position to give information. Again, the political difficulties between the two countries of recent years have often placed the Paris correspondents in a very invidious position.

This brings me to the Fashoda trouble, which arose last autumn while M. Zola was still in his country retreat. The great novelist's enemies have often alleged that he is no true Frenchman; but for my part, after thirty years' intimacy with the French, I would claim for him that his country counts no better patriot. He is on principle opposed to warfare, but there is a higher patriotism than that which consists in perpetually beating

the big drum, and that higher patriotism is Zola's.

The Fashoda difficulties troubled him sorely, and directly it seemed likely that the situation might become serious he told me that it would be impossible for him to remain in England. The progress of the negotiations between France and Great Britain was watched with keen vigilance, and M. Zola was ready to start at the first sign of those negotiations collapsing. As all his friends were opposed to his return to France (they had again virtually forbidden it late in September when the Brisson Ministry finally submitted the case for revision to the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation), he would probably have gone to Belgium, but I doubt whether he would have remained long in that country.

I have said that M. Zola is opposed to warfare on principle. His views in this respect have long been shared by me. Life's keenest impressions are those acquired in childhood and youth. And in my youth—I was but seventeen, though already acting as a war correspondent, the youngest, I suppose, on record—I witnessed war attended by every horror:—A city, Paris, starved by the

foreigner and subsequently in part fired by some of its own children. And between those disasters, having passed through the hostile lines, I saw an army of 125,000 men with 350 guns, that of Chanzy, irretrievably routed after battling in a snowstorm of three days' duration, cast into highways and byways, with thousands of barefooted stragglers begging their bread, with hundreds of farmers bewailing their crops, their cattle, and their ruined homesteads, with mothers innumerable weeping for their sons, and fair girls in the heyday of their youth lamenting the lads to whom their troth was plighted. And in that 'Retraite Infernale,' as one of its historians has called it, I saw want, hunger, cupidity, cruelty, disease, stalking beside the war fiend; so no wonder that, like Zola, I regard warfare as the greatest of the abominations that fall upon the world. I often regret that, short of actual war itself and its disaster and misery, there should be no means of bringing the whole horror of the thing home to those silly, arm-chair, jingo journalists of many countries, our own included, who, viewing war simply as a means of imposing the will of the stronger upon the weaker, and losing sight of all that attends it, save martial pomp and individual

heroism, ever clamour for the exercise of force as soon as any difficulty arises between two governments.

Ties of affection, bonds of marriage, as well as long years of intimacy, link me moreover to the French people; and more keenly, perhaps, than even the master himself, did I realise what war between France and England might mean; thus we both had an anxious time during the Fashoda trouble. Fortunately for the general peace hostilities were averted, and M. Zola was thus able to remain in his secluded English home, and to continue the writing of his novel.

The weather was still very fine, and now and again he ventured upon a little excursion. The principal one was to Virginia Water, where he strolled round the lake, then drove through part of the Great Park, and thence on to Windsor Castle, where he saw all the sights, the State apartments, St. George's Hall and Chapel, the Albert Memorial Chapel, and so forth. And, as he had brought his hand camera with him, he was able to take a few snapshots of what he saw. I was not present on that occasion; his companions were a French gentleman, a very intimate friend,

and my daughter, but I was pleased to hear that he had, at all events, seen Windsor. As a rule, it was extremely difficult to induce him to emerge from his solitude. When he took a walk or a bicycle ride his destination was simply some sleepy Surrey village or deserted common.

He appreciated English scenery. Around Oatlands he had been much struck by the beauty of the trees, and was greatly astonished to find such lofty and perfect hedges of holly running at times for a mile almost without a break on either side of the roads. I suppose that some of the finest holly hedges in England are to be found in that district. Then, too, the rookeries surprised and interested him. There was one he could see from his window at the last of his country residences, and many an idle half-hour was spent by him in watching the flight of the birds or their occasional parliaments.

Nobody recognised him on his rambles. I even doubt if people, generally, thought him a foreigner. He had long since ceased to wear his rosette of the Legion of Honour, and he had replaced his white billycock by an English straw hat. Towards the close of the fine weather he

purchased a 'bowler,' which greatly altered his appearance. Indeed, there is nothing like a 'bowler' to make a foreigner look English.

Wareham and I had now quite ceased to fear that any attempt would be made to serve the Versailles judgment on M. Zola. We were only troubled by gentlemen of the Press, both French and English, for since Esterhazy had fled from France and the case for revision had been formally referred to the Cour de Cassation, several newspapers had become desirous of ascertaining M. Zola's views on the course of events. My instructions remained, however, the same as formerly: I was to tell every applicant that M. Zola declined to make any public statement, and that he would receive nobody. I was occasionally inclined to fancy that some of those who called on me imagined that these instructions were of my own invention, and that I was simply keeping M. Zola *au secret* for purposes of my own. But nothing was further from the truth.

Personally, at certain moments, when the revision proceedings began, when M. Brisson fell from office, when M. Dupuy, listening to the clamour of a pack of jackals, transferred the

revision inquiry from the Criminal Chamber to the entire Court of Cassation, I thought that it might really be advisable for him to speak out. But, anxious though he was, disgusted, indignant, too, at times, he would do nothing to add fuel to the flame. Passions were roused to a high enough pitch already, and he had no desire to inflame them more.

Besides, the cause was in very good hands; Clemenceau and Vaughan, Yves Guyot and Reinach, Jaurès and Gerault-Richard, Pressensé, Cornély, and scores of others were fighting admirably in the Press, and his intervention was not required. Many a man circumstanced as M. Zola was would have rushed into print for the mere sake of notoriety, but he condemned himself to silence, stifling the words which rose from his throbbing heart. And, after all, was not that course more worthy, more dignified?

Thus I could only return one answer to the newspaper men who wrote to me or called at my house. Late in the autumn there was an average of three applications a week. One or two gentlemen, I believe, imagined that M. Zola was staying very near me, and, failing to learn anything at my

place, they tried to question one or two tradesmen in the neighbourhood. One of these, a grocer, became so irate at the frequent inquiries as to whether a Frenchman, who wrote books and had a grey beard, and wore glasses, was not staying in the vicinity, that he ended by receiving the reporters with far more energy than politeness, not only ordering them out of his shop at the double quick, but pursuing them with his vituperative eloquence. 'Taking one consideration with another, a reporter's lot, at times, is not a happy one.'

A climax was reached when one gentleman, after communicating with M. Zola by letter through various channels and receiving no answer from him, ascertained my address and called there. As servants are not always to be depended upon, we had made it virtually a rule at home that whenever a stranger was seen at the front door my wife herself should, if possible, answer it. And she did so in the instance I am referring to.

Well, the gentleman first asked for me, and, on learning that I was absent, he explained that he was a friend, a private friend of M. Zola, whom he wished to see on an important private matter.

Could she, my wife, oblige him with M. Zola's address? No, she could not; he had better write, and his letter would be duly forwarded by me. Then the applicant started on another story. It was of no use his writing, he must see me. Should I be at home on the morrow? The matter was of great importance, it would mean a large sum of money for myself and so on. My wife had not much confidence in what was told her, but she requested the visitor to leave his name and address in order that I might make an appointment with him, should I think such a course advisable.

He thereupon wrote me a few lines in my dining-room, and then all at once had the cool impudence to tell my wife that he would then and there give her a matter of 20*l.* or 25*l.* if she would only tell him where he could find M. Zola, as the private interests at stake were so enormous!

She was, at the moment, far more amazed and amused than indignant. She bade the gentleman keep his money, and then showed him to the door. To me that evening she did not mention the incident, and, indeed, I only heard of it after I had taken the trouble to communicate with M. Zola respecting the gentleman's urgent private business,

which (so it turned out) was purely and simply connected with journalism, my visitor having acted on behalf of the owner of a well-known London newspaper.

I do not know whether his principal had any knowledge of his impudent attempt at bribery. For my own part I much regret that my wife (I suppose in the interests of peace) should have kept it from me at the time as she did, for the gentleman might otherwise have experienced, as he deserved, a rather unpleasant ten minutes.

XII

THE FINAL RESTING-PLACE

AT last the time arrived when it became necessary to remove M. Zola from his country quarters, and by his desire Wareham and I then looked around us for a suitable suburban hotel. The autumn was now far spent and M. Zola felt confident that he would be back in Paris by the end of the year. Had he foreseen that his exile would prove so long, he would certainly have sent for a couple of his French servants, and have set up a quiet establishment in some other furnished house. But for another month or two he considered that hotel accommodation would well suffice.

The place selected for him by Wareham and myself was the Queen's Hotel, Upper Norwood, and there he remained from late in the autumn of 1898 until his departure from England.

A glance at the Queen's Hotel shows one that

it is composed of what were once separate houses, now connected together by buildings of one storey only. Each of these houses, or, as one may perhaps call them, pavilions, has a separate entrance and staircase; and the advantage of this, to one circumstanced as M. Zola was, must be obvious. A person lodging in one of the pavilions can come and go freely. There is no vast hall to cross, with a dozen servants standing around, ready to scrutinise you as you pass in and out. You have your suite of rooms in one or another pavilion, you take your meals there in your own dining-room, and you can shut yourself off, as it were, from the greater part of the establishment and enjoy privacy and quiet. This, no doubt, is the reason why many well-to-do people, who dislike the stir and bustle of the ordinary hotel, patronise the hostelry at Upper Norwood.

There at one time—when consulting Sir Morell Mackenzie, I believe—stayed the unfortunate Emperor Frederick; and now it may add to its list of patrons the most famous Frenchman of his day.

It seemed to Wareham and me that the Queen's Hotel would, under the circumstances, prove an

ideal retreat for M. Zola. Moreover, Upper Norwood stands on very high ground, and it was probable therefore that he would largely escape the winter fogs. Of course the Crystal Palace was comparatively near, but it was not very largely patronised in the winter, and, besides, if M. Zola wished to escape a crowd, he had only to take his walks in another direction.

The Queen's Hotel stands back from the road; but, in the first instance, as a precautionary measure it was thought best to select for M. Zola a suite of rooms overlooking the extensive gardens. As time went on, however, the trees lost their last leaves, the vista from these rooms, charming enough in summer, became very cheerless. So the master's quarters were shifted to a larger suite on the ground floor, with the windows of the two communicating sitting-rooms overlooking both the road and the garden.

The two sitting-rooms were an advantage, particularly during the time that Mme. Zola stayed at the Queen's Hotel (for she joined her husband on and off), as he could devote one of them entirely to his work. But when Mme. Zola finally left England (in a very ailing state, after a terrible cold

had kept her within doors for some weeks) her husband moved once again, and installed himself on the second floor, where the rooms were smaller and therefore easier to warm. It was then mid-winter.

The various rooms M. Zola occupied and in which he spent from seven to eight months—that is by far the greater portion of his exile—were all part of the same house or pavilion, this being the last of the pavilions constituting the hotel proper. Adjoining is a lower building, belonging to the same proprietary as the hotel, but, in a measure, distinct from it. Most of M. Zola's tenancy was spent in the topmost rooms. After bringing the master up from the country, I took him one morning down to Norwood, and he cordially approved of the arrangements which had been made for him. There was only one thing amiss. Wareham and I had been promised that he should have a waiter speaking French to attend on him; and the one provided knew perhaps just a few words of that language. However, he was very intelligent, very discreet, very willing to oblige—a pattern waiter of the good old English school. And when I had explained to him exactly what would be required,

he took due note of everything, and for many months the arrangements that were made worked virtually without a hitch.

If M. Zola's surroundings had altered, the routine of his life remained the same as formerly. With regard to his novel 'Fécondité' he had, as the saying goes, 'warmed to his work,' which he pursued at the Queen's Hotel with unflagging energy.

Knowing his habits I never (unless under exceptional circumstances) visited him till he had finished his daily *quantum* of 'copy,' that was about the luncheon hour. Then we would talk business, communicate to one another such news as might be necessary, and at times exchange impressions with regard to the incidents of the day.

Among other matters often discussed were the English birth-rate and the rearing of English children, points which deeply interested M. Zola, as they were germane to the subject of 'Fécondité.' I could at first only give him general information, but the Rev. R. Ussher, vicar of Westbury, Bucks, the able author of 'Neo-Malthusianism,' very kindly sent me a copy of his exhaustive work, which contained many particulars on the points

that principally interested M. Zola. Moreover, Mr. George P. Brett, the President of the Macmillan Company of New York (M. Zola's American publishers), supplied him with some interesting information respecting the United States.

With regard to England, M. Zola had been much struck by certain proceedings instituted during his exile against medical men, midwives, and others, proceedings which seemed to point to the existence in this country of a state of affairs much akin to that prevailing in France. The affair of the brothers Chrimes, who first sold bogus medicines and then proceeded to blackmail the women who had purchased them, was, in Zola's estimation, particularly significant, for here were hundreds and hundreds of Englishwomen applying to those men for the means of accomplishing the greatest crime against Nature there could be.

On that point M. Zola spoke in no uncertain language. He understood well enough that the authorities could not justly single out a few of those hundreds of women for prosecution and punishment: but he censured the women quite as much as he censured the convicted men, who were, after all, but common scoundrels.

And he was amazed to find that so few English newspapers ventured to speak out on the matter. There were plenty of leaderettes on the cunning shown by the men, but the alacrity of the women to purchase the bogus medicines was, as a rule, lightly passed over; and great as is M. Zola's admiration for the British Press in many respects, he could but regard its attitude towards the Chrimes case as lamentably inadequate and lacking in moral courage.

'A great responsibility,' said he, 'rests with those who, possessing commanding influence, refrain from requisite action, and who, instead of seeking to cure proved and acknowledged evils, connive at driving them beneath the surface, where, in secret, they steadily grow and expand.' And all this for the sake of the 'young person,' to whose mythical innocence the welfare of a whole nation is often sacrificed. M. Zola's views are summed up in the words: 'Let all be exposed and discussed, in order that all may be cured!'

He regards Neo-Malthusianism and its practices as abominable, and when he had learnt more of the actual situation in England he was emphatically of opinion that his book 'Fécondité,' though

applied to France alone, might well, with little alteration, be applied to this country also.

The fluctuations in the English birth-rate from 1872 to 1897 were to him full of meaning. At a certain period, for instance, they showed all the harm wrought by the abominable Bradlaugh-Besant campaign. But what he dwelt on still more was the absolute physical incapacity of so many English mothers to suckle their own offspring. Circumstances are much the same both in France and the United States, at least among the older Colonial families. In three or four generations the women of a family in which the practice of suckling has ceased, are altogether unable to give the breast; and the 'bottle' ensues, with its thousand evils and a gradual deterioration of the race.

On the last occasion when James Russell Lowell came to England he was asked what change, if any, he remarked since his last visit, among the people he met, and he replied that he was most struck by the falling off in height, and breadth of shoulders, of the average man in the London streets.

Though matters have not yet reached such a

point as in France and elsewhere, it is I think incontestable that the English race, like many another, is physically deteriorating. Athletics tend to improve the standard, but there must be proper material to work upon, and M. Zola, I found, held the view that for a race to be healthy its womenfolk should be willing and able to discharge the primary duties of Nature. When he discovered that so many Englishwomen would not or could not suckle their babes, he remarked that England had started on the same downward course as France.

He often watched the troops of nursemaids and children whom he met during his afternoon strolls. He noticed and told me how many of the former neglected their charges, standing about, flirting or gossiping, or looking into shop windows, while the baby in the bassinette or the mail-cart sucked away at that vile invention the bone and gutta-percha 'soother,' and he was astonished that ladies should apparently consider it beneath them to accompany baby on the promenade. Indeed the invariable absence of the mothers gave him a rather bad opinion of them: for surely they must know that many of the nurse-girls neglected the infants

and yet they exercised no supervision. 'Of course,' said he, 'they are visiting or receiving, or reading novels, or bicycling or playing lawn tennis. Ah! well, that is hardly my conception of a mother's duty towards her infant, whatever be her station in life.'

Now and again at intervals I accompanied him on his afternoon walks. These generally took a semi-circular form. We descended from the plateau of Upper Norwood on one side to climb to it again on another. Sometimes we passed by way of Beulah Spa, then round by some fields and a recreation ground, with the name of which I am not acquainted. There were several shapely oak trees thereabouts, which he greatly admired and even photographed.

'Do you know,' he remarked to me one afternoon,' when I come out all alone for my usual constitutional, and want to shake off some worrying thoughts, I often amuse myself by counting the number of hairpins which I see lying on the foot-pavement. Oh! you need not laugh, it is very curious, I assure you. I already had ideas for two essays—one on the capital "I" in its relation to the English character, and another on the physiology

of the English "guillotine" window and the forms it affects, not forgetting the circumstance that whenever an architect introduces a French window into an English house, it invaribly opens outwardly so as to be well buffeted by the wind, instead of into the room as it should do. Well, now I am beginning to think that I might write something on the carelessness of Englishwomen in fastening up their hair, and the phenomenal consumption of hairpins in England. For the consumption must be enormous since the loss is so great, as I will show you.'

Then he proceeded to ocular demonstration. As we walked on for half an hour or so, principally along roads bordered by the umbrageous gardens of villa residences, we counted all the hairpins we could see. There were about four dozen. And he was careful to point out that we had chiefly followed a route where there was but a moderate amount of traffic.

Not one man in a thousand probably would have thought of counting the lost hairpins in the streets; but then M. Zola is an observer, and if I tell this anecdote, which some may think puerile, it is by way of illustrating his powers of observation

and the length to which he occasionally carries them.

On one point, I told him, he was rather in the wrong. The great loss of hairpins did not proceed so much from the carelessness of women in fastening their hair, as from their 'pennywise and pound-foolish' system of buying cheap hairpins with few and inefficient 'twists.' These cheap hairpins never 'caught' properly in their coiled-up tresses. The women went out, walked rapidly, tossed their heads perchance, and one at least of their hairpins fell to the ground. Supposing one hundred women passed along a certain road or street in the course of the day, it would not be surprising to find that at least thirty hairpins were lost there. And I concluded by saying that, to the best of my belief, the aforesaid hairpins were 'made in Germany.'

Another thing which amused and interested M. Zola when he took his walks around Norwood was to note the often curious and often high-sounding names bestowed on villa residences. As a rule the smaller the place the more grandiose the appellation bestowed on it. Some of the names M. Zola, having now made progress with

his English, could readily understand; others, too, were virtually French, such as Bellevue, Beaumont, and so forth; but there were several that I had to interpret, such as Oakdene, Thornbrake, Beechcroft, Hillbrow, Woodcote, Fernside, Fairholme, Inglenook, etc. And there was one name that I could not explain to him at all—an awful name, which I fancied might be Gaelic or Celtic, though I appealed in vain to Scottish, Irish, and Welsh friends for an interpretation of its meaning. It was written thus: 'Ly-ee-Moon.'

Nobody of my acquaintance was able to explain it to me. M. Zola wrote it down in his memorandum-book as an abstruse puzzle. However, while this narrative was appearing in the 'Evening News,' several correspondents kindly informed me that Ly-ee-Moon (at times written 'Lai-Mun') was Chinese, being the name of a narrow passage or strait between the island of Hong-Kong and the mainland of China (now transferred to Great Britain), at the eastern entrance to the harbour of the city of Victoria on the island.

It seems also that Ly-ee-Moon is a name often given to ships sailing in the China seas. And in the case of the Norwood house, built by a retired

shipowner and sea captain, the name was taken from a vessel plying on the Australian coast for many years, and ultimately wrecked with great loss of life. The owner of the Norwood house had an engraving of the ship executed on a plate-glass window of his hall. Until these explanations reached me both M. Zola and myself were quite as much at sea (with regard to 'Ly-ee-Moon') as ever its owner and captain was.

When I spent an afternoon at Norwood with M. Zola we generally returned to the hotel about half-past four for a cup of tea. And on the way back (particularly during the last months) I frequently purchased postage stamps for him at the chief post-office. He might, of course, have bought them himself, and as a matter of fact he did at times do so. But he was aware, I think, that he was regarded with some suspicion by the the young lady clerks under the control of the Duke of Norfolk.

At certain periods, Christmas time and the New Year, for instance, M. Zola's correspondence became extensive, and on the first occasion when he entered the Upper Norwood post-office and asked for fifty 2½*d.* stamps he was looked at with

surprise. When, a couple of days later, he applied for another fifty, the young ladies eyed him as if he were a genuine curiosity. A hundred 2½*d.* stamps in four days! What could he do with them? Nobody could tell. When, shortly afterwards, he returned for another supply of the same kind, the Norwood post-office was convulsed. And I doubt if even now some of the young ladies have quite got over that brief but extraordinary run on the so-called 'foreign stamp.'

I hope they do not imagine that M. Zola was hungry, and bought those stamps to eat.

XIII

WINTER DAYS

THE winter was hardly a cold one, but it proved very tempestuous, and Upper Norwood, standing high as it does, felt the full force of the gales. Christmas found M. Zola alone; still, this did not particularly affect him, as Christmas, save as a religious observance, is but little kept up in France, where festivity and holiday-making are reserved for the New Year. In M. Zola's rooms the only token of the season was a huge branch of mistletoe hanging over the chimney-piece. This he had bought himself, after I had told him of the privileges that attached to mistletoe in England. There were, however, no young ladies to kiss, and, if I remember rightly, Mme. Zola, who had been absent in Paris, did not return to Norwood until a day or two before the New Year.

While her husband formed a fairly favourable

opinion of England, its customs and its climate, Mme. Zola, I fear, was scarcely pleased with this country. At all events, she finally left it vowing that she would never return. But then for three or four weeks bronchitis and kindred ailments had kept her absolutely imprisoned in her room—her illness lasting the longer, perhaps, because she was unwilling to place herself in the hands of any medical man.

The New Year was but a day or two old, when one of the London morning newspapers announced with a great show of authority that an application for the extradition of M. Zola was imminent. Somebody, moreover, informed the same journal that he had recognised and interviewed M. Zola an evening or two previously, to which statement was appended a brief account of some of M. Zola's views. All this amazed me the more as on the very day mentioned in the newspaper I had been with the master till nine P.M. and I could hardly believe that anybody had interviewed him after that hour. Moreover, my wife had since seen him, and he had said nothing to her of any visit or interview. Nevertheless, as other papers proceeded to copy the statements to which I have referred, I

thought it as well to communicate with our exile on the subject.

Through the carelessness of one of M. Zola's friends, Wareham's name and address had lately been given to an English journalist usually resident in Paris, and this journalist had then come to London to try to discover the master's whereabouts. It was therefore possible that there might be some truth in the story. But M. Zola promptly wired to me that such was not the case, and followed up his telegram with a note in which he said:

'My dear confrère and friend,—I have just telegraphed to you that the whole story of a journalist having interviewed me is purely and simply a falsehood. I have seen nobody. Again, there can be no question of extradition in my case; all that could be done would be to serve me with the judgment of the Assize Court. Those people don't even know what they write about.

'As for ——'s indiscretion, this is to be regretted. I am writing to him. For the sake of our communications, I have always desired that Wareham's name and address should be known only to those on whom one can depend. Tell him that he must remain on his guard and *never*

acknowledge that he knows my address. Persevere in that course yourself. I will wait a few days to see if anything occurs before deciding whether the correspondence arrangements should be altered. It would be a big affair; and I should afterwards regret a change if it were to prove uncalled for. Let us wait.'

Going through the many memoranda and notes I received from M. Zola during his exile, I also find this, dated February: 'You did right to refuse Mr. —— my address. I absolutely decline to see anybody. No matter who may call on you, under whatever pretext it be, preserve the silence of the tomb. Less than ever am I disposed to let people disturb me.'

Again, a little later: 'No; I will see neither the gentleman nor the lady. Tell them so distinctly, in order that they may worry you no more.'

With the New Year, it will be remembered, had come a succession of startling events which kept M. Zola in a state of acute anxiety. The violent attacks of the anti-Revisionists on the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation culminated in the resignation of Q. de Beaurepaire, in an inquiry

into the Criminal Chamber's methods of investigation, and finally in the passing of a law which transferred the task of the Criminal Chamber to the whole of the Supreme Court. On the many intrigues of that period I often conversed with M. Zola, who was particularly angered by the blind opposition of President Faure and the impudent duplicity of Prime Minister Dupuy. These two were undoubtedly doing their utmost to impede the course of justice.

Then suddenly, on February 17, came a thunderbolt. Faure had died on the previous evening, and by his death one of the greatest obstacles to the triumph of truth was for ever removed. We talked of the defunct president at some length, M. Zola adhering to the opinions that he had expressed during the summer.

But the great question was who would succeed M. Faure. When M. Brisson had fallen from office after initiating the Revision proceedings, M. Zola had said to me: 'Brisson's present fall does not signify; it was bound to come. But hereafter he will reap his reward for his courage in favouring revision. Brisson will be Faure's successor as President of the Republic.'

In expressing this opinion M. Zola had imagined that Faure would live to complete his full term of office. His death in the very midst of the battle entirely changed the position. M. Brisson's time had not come, and considering his age it indeed now seemed as if he might never attain to the supreme magistracy. The future looked blank; but M. Loubet was elected President, and a feeling of great relief followed.

I have reason to believe that M. Zola regards the death of President Faure as the crucial turning-point in the whole Dreyfus business. Had Faure lived every means would still have been employed to shield the guilty; all the influence of the Elysée would, as before, have been brought to bear against the unhappy prisoner of Devil's Island.

During those January and February days M. Zola was an eager reader of the newspapers. Rumours of all kinds were in circulation, and once again in M. Zola's mind did despondency alternate with hopefulness. I must say, however, that he was not particularly impressed by Paul Déroulède's attempt to induce General Roget to march on the Elysée. He regards Déroulède as a scarcely sane

individual, and holds views on Parisian demonstrations which may surprise some of those who believe everything they read in the newspapers.

These views may be epitomised as follows: The Government can always put down trouble in the streets when it desires to do so. If trouble occurs it is because the Government allows it. Three-fourths of the 'demonstrations' that have taken place in Paris during the last year or two have been simply 'got up' by professional agitators. The men who start the shouting and the marching are paid for their services, the tariff being as a rule two francs per demonstration. With 500 francs, that is 20*l.*, one can get 250 men together. These are joined by as many fools and a small contingent of enthusiasts, and then you have a rumpus on the boulevards, and half the newspapers in Europe announcing on the morrow: 'Serious Disturbances in Paris. Impending Revolution.' Some people may ask, Where does the money for many of these demonstrations come from? The answer is that it comes largely from much the same sources as those whence General Boulanger's funds were derived—that is, from the Orleanist party.

As for military insubordination, plotting, or anything of that kind, M. Zola often pointed out to me that no general could effect a revolution, for the simple reason that he could not rely on his men to follow him in an illegal attempt. It was quite possible that now and again other generals besides Boulanger had dreamt of overturning the Republic, but they had not the means to do so. It was as likely as not that the officer foolhardy enough to make the attempt would be shot in the back by some of the Socialists among the rank and file. Boulanger no doubt could have counted on a good many men and 'non-coms.,' as he was popular with them, but few if any officers above the rank of captain would have followed him.

To-day, moreover, intense jealousy still reigns among the French general officers. There is not one among them of sufficient pre-eminence and popularity to gather round him a large contingent of military men of high rank for any political purpose. And this, of course—quite apart from the opinions of the masses—largely makes for a continuance of the Republican *régime*.

With a weak Government in office, one with

a policy of drift, everything may become possible ; but, so long as foresight and vigilance are shown, the Republic remains impregnable. If military malcontents become obstreperous it is only necessary to treat them as General Boulanger was treated.

I recollect hearing M. Yves Guyot, who was a member of the Cabinet which put down 'the brave general on the black horse,' and who was also one of the few French friends who visited M. Zola during his exile, give a brief account of some of the decisive steps which were taken to stop the Boulangist agitation. The Prefect of Police of that time was summoned to the Ministry of the Interior, where two or three members of the Government awaited his arrival. Amongst other orders given him was one (if I remember rightly) for the dissolution of M. Déroulède's 'League of Patriots,' which then, as more recently, was at the bottom of much of the agitation.

The Prefect hesitated ; he was afraid to execute his orders. 'Very well, then,' said M. Constans, M. Guyot, and others, 'you may regard your resignation as accepted ; you are not the man for the situation ; if you are afraid, there are

plenty who are not; and we shall immediately replace you.'

That threat of the loss of office wrought an immediate change in the Prefect. He became as brave as he had been timorous, and with all due energy he proceeded to carry out his instructions. Boulangism was crushed and held up to public opprobrium and ridicule; and but for the culpable weakness and connivance of M. Félix Faure and his favourite Prime Minister, M. Méline, it would never have revived in its varied forms of anti-Semitism, anti-Dreyfusism, etc.

French functionaries, those of the Civil Service, are, as a rule, a docile set; but every now and again a Government finding some laxity among prefects and sub-prefects makes a few examples. Three or four prefects of departments are transferred in disgrace to less important towns; two or three are cashiered, and the same method is followed with some of the sub-prefects. Thereupon, all the others, prefects and 'subs,' throughout the eighty and odd departments of France, hasten to show themselves vigilant and, if need be, energetic. Taking one consideration with another, this system of frightening the prefects into obedience and

vigilance has, so far as the maintenance of public order is concerned, answered admirably well whenever it has been applied during the last fifty years. It has undoubtedly been adopted at times for the furtherance of purely despotic or arbitrary aims; but if ever it was justified such was the case during the Dreyfus agitation. If the Government had not connived, for purposes of its own, at the proceedings of what the French call the 'militarist' party, there would have been no turmoil at all.

But those in power desired to shield culprits of high rank and to defend the effete organisation of the French War-office. And those who thus misused the power they held, who sacrificed the national interests, who trampled truth and justice under foot, and rendered their country an object of amazement, distrust, and ridicule throughout the length and breadth of Europe (Russia not excepted) will be censured and condemned in no uncertain voice by the France of to-morrow.

But I am forgetting the prefects and sub-prefects. I mentioned them partly because M. Zola himself might have been one of them. It is not generally known, I believe, that at the time of

the Franco-German war he in some degree assisted one of the sub-prefects in the discharge of his duties, and (had he only so chosen) might even have become a sub-prefect himself. He had been an opposition, a Republican journalist, before the fall of the Empire, and M. Gambetta, during his virtual dictatorship throughout the latter part of the Franco-German war, was very fond of appointing journalists of that description to office, both in the army and the Civil Service. M. Zola, then, might have become a sub-prefect to begin with; and, later, a full-blown prefect. Picture him in a cocked hat and a uniform bedizened with gold lace, and with a slender sword dangling by his side. That, at all events, was how sub-prefects and prefects used to array themselves when 'in the exercise of their functions.'

I doubt if M. Zola would ever have made a good functionary. His character is too independent, and in all likelihood he would have resigned the very first time that he happened to have 'a few words' with his Minister. But politics having caught him in their grasp he would doubtless (like the few functionaries of independent views who throw up their posts in France) have

next come forward as a candidate for the Chamber or the Senate. And then—why not? He might have been an Under-Secretary of State, later a Minister, and finally President of the Republic. True, as he himself knows, and readily admits, he is no orator; but then orators are not always the men who get on in France. Thiers was a ready and fluent speaker, but MacMahon could scarcely say (or learn by heart) twenty consecutive words. Grévy, it is true, could be long-winded, prosy, and didactic; but the powers of elocution which Carnot and Félix Faure possessed were infinitesimal. And so the idea of Émile Zola, President of the Republic, may not be so far-fetched after all, particularly when one remembers Zola's great powers of observation, analysis, and foresight.

Had he taken to politics in his younger days he would at least have made his mark in the career thus chosen. And it may be that, in some respects, French public life might then have been healthier than it has proved during the last quarter of a century. Perchance, too, on the other hand, many old maids and young persons, not to mention ecclesiastics and vigilance societies, would have been spared manifold pious ejaculations and gasps

of horror. Again, my poor father—imprisoned, ruined, and hounded to his death—might still have been alive.

Unless some other courageous man had arisen to tear the veil away from before human life, such as it is in so-called civilised communities, and show society its own self in all its rottenness, foulness, and hypocrisy—so that on more than one occasion, shrinking guiltily from its own image, it has denounced the plain unvarnished truth as libel—there would have been no 'Nana' and no 'Pot Bouille,' no 'Assommoir,' and no 'Germinal.' And no 'La Terre.' 'La Débâcle,' and 'Lourdes,' and 'Rome,' 'Paris,' and 'Fécondité,' and all the other books that have flowed from Émile Zola's busy pen would have remained unwritten. But for my own part I would rather that the world should possess those books than that Zola when tempted, as he was, should have cast literature aside to plunge into the abominable and degrading vortex of politics.

Like all men of intellect he certainly has his views on important political questions, and again and again he has enunciated them in the face of fierce opposition. In the Dreyfus case, however, he has been no politician, but simply the indignant

champion of an innocent man. And his task over, truth and justice vindicated, he asks no reward, no office; he simply desires to take up his pen once more and revert to his life work :—The delineation and exposure of the crimes, follies, and shortcomings of society as now constituted, in order that those who *are* in politics, who control human affairs, may, in full knowledge of existing evils, do their utmost to remedy them and prepare the way for a better and a happier world.

XIV

'WAITING FOR THE VERDICT'

I CAN still see before me the sitting-room on the second floor of the Queen's Hotel, in which M. Zola spent so much of his time and wrote so many pages of 'Fécondité' during the last six months or so of his exile. A spacious room it was, if a rather low one, with three windows overlooking the road which passes the hotel.

A very large looking-glass in a gilt frame surmounted the mantelpiece, on which stood two or three little blue vases. Paper of a light colour and a large flowing arabesque pattern with a broad frieze covered the walls. There was not a single picture of any kind in the room, neither steel engraving, nor lithograph, nor chromo; and remembering what pictures usually are, even in the best of hotels, it was perhaps just as well that there should have been none in that room at

the Queen's. Yet during the many hours I spent there the bareness of the walls often worried me.

Against the one that faced the fireplace stood a small sideboard. Then on another side was a sofa, and here and there were half a dozen chairs. The room was rich in tables, it counted no fewer than five. On a folding card-table in one corner M. Zola's stock of letter and 'copy' paper, his weighing scales for letters, his envelopes, pens, and pencils, were duly set out. Then in front of the central window was the table at which he worked every morning. It was of mahogany, little more than three feet long and barely two feet wide. Whenever he raised his eyes from his writing, he could see the road below him, and the houses across the way. On a similar table at another of the windows he usually kept such books and reviews as reached him from France.

In the centre of the room, under the electric lights—which, however, were only fitted towards the end of M. Zola's sojourn at the hotel, so that throughout the winter a paraffin lamp supplied the necessary illumination—stood the table at which one lunched and dined. It was

round and would just accommodate four persons. Finally, beside M. Zola's favourite arm-chair, near the fireplace, was a little gipsy table, on which he usually kept the day's newspapers, and perchance the volume he was reading at the time.

A doorway on the same side as the fireplace gave ingress to the bedchamber, which was smaller than the sitting-room, and adequately, but by no means luxuriously furnished.

On the little writing-table near the middle window were first a small inkstand belonging to the hotel, then a few paper-weights covering memoranda jotted down on little square pieces of paper, about three inches long either way, together with an old yellowish newspaper which did duty as a blotting pad; and a pen with a 'j' nib and a very heavy ivory handle, so heavy, indeed, that though the master often offered it to me I could never write with it. With this pen, however, he himself did all his work. That work he generally cleared away before lunch, and locked up in his bedroom wardrobe, so that by the time a visitor arrived there was never any litter in the sitting-room.

The road, viewed from the writing-table window, was at times fairly lively. Nursemaids and children, bicyclists and others passed constantly to and fro. Stylish carriages also rolled by during the afternoon, and at intervals a little green omnibus went its way at a slow jog-trot. The detached villa residences on the other side of the road were, however, singularly lifeless. One day M. Zola remarked to me: 'I have never seen a soul in those houses during all the months I have been here. They are occupied certainly, for the window blinds are pulled up every morning and lowered every evening, but I can never detect who does this; and I have never seen anybody leave the houses or enter them.'

At last one afternoon he told me that one of these villas had woke up, for on the previous day he had espied a lady in the garden watering some flowers.

Rather lower down the road there was a livelier house, one which had a balconied window, which was almost invaribly open, and here servants and children were often to be seen. 'That,' said M. Zola, 'is the one little corner of life and gaiety, amidst all the other silence and lack of life.

Whenever I feel dull or worried I look over there.'

As a rule the Queen's Hotel itself is, as I have already mentioned, a very quiet place; but now and again a wedding breakfast was given there. Broughams and landaus would then roll over the gravel sweep, and M. Zola and I would at times lean out of the windows and exchange opinions with respect to the bridal pair and the guests. What surprised and amused him, on one occasion when a wedding party came to the hotel, was to notice that all the coachmen of the carriages wore yellow flowers and favours; for in France yellow is not only associated with jealousy, but also with conjugal faithlessness.

'If those flowers are to be taken as an omen,' said M. Zola to me, 'that happy pair will soon be in the Divorce Court.'

During the latter part of his stay at Norwood, when the door between his bed and sitting room remained open, one could see on a chest of drawers in the former apartment a pair of life-size porcelain cats, coloured a purplish maroon, with sparkling yellow glass eyes, and an abundance of fantastic yellow spots. These cats had been bought by him

as a souvenir of England and English art, for he was much struck by their oddity. He had been offered others—for instance, white ones with little coloured landscapes printed all over their backs and sides—surely as idiotic an embellishment as any insane potter could devise—but although these had sorely tempted him he had finally decided in favour of the maroon and yellow abominations.

A little girl of mine, who found herself face to face with those cats one day in his room, was quite startled by them, and has since expressed the opinion that Sir John Tenniel ought to have seen them before he drew the Cheshire cat for 'Alice in Wonderland.' For my own part I can imagine the laughter and the jeers of M. Zola's artistic friends when those choice specimens of British art are shown to them in Paris.

At intervals during his long sojourn at the Queen's Hotel M. Zola received a few brief visits from French friends, chiefly literary men and politicians, whose names need not be mentioned, but who have identified themselves with the cause of Revision. At times these gentlemen found themselves in London on other matters, and profited by the opportunity to run down to

Norwood. On other occasions they made the journey from France for the especial purpose of quieting M. Zola's impatience, and telling him that he must not yet think of returning home. Again, M. Fasquelle, the French publisher, came over four or five times, now on business and now in a friendly way.

I think that during the seven or eight months that M. Zola stayed at the Queen's Hotel, he received altogether some ten visits from compatriots, which visits were often of only an hour or two's duration. Thus, Mme. Zola having returned to France, he was frequently very much alone.

During the last months of his exile my wife fell seriously ill, and I could not then go so often to Norwood. Afterwards ague caught me in its grip, and my visits ceased for two or three successive weeks. All I could do in an emergency was to place my eldest daughter or my son at M. Zola's disposal.

The foreign visitors he received—by foreign I mean non-French—were (apart from the Warehams, myself and family) very few in number. I think that an eminent Russian *publiciste* who happened to be a personal friend (M. Zola has

long been popular in Russia, where even the Emperor has read many of his books) saw him on one occasion. Then, when M. Yves Guyot called, he brought with him an English friend who was pledged to secrecy.

A well-known English novelist and art critic, M. Zola's oldest English friend, and his earliest champion in this country, likewise saw him. Further, in a friendly capacity he received an English journalist for whom he has much regard, and who came to see him quite apart from any journalistic matters. To this list I will add the names of Mr. Andrew Chatto and Mr. Percy Spalding, of Messrs Chatto and Windus, and Mr. George P. Brett, of the Macmillan Company of New York.

Such, then, were M. Zola's visitors and guests —say, apart from the Warehams, myself and family, less than a score of persons, the total duration of whose visits added together amounted perhaps to a hundred and twenty hours spread over many long and trying months.

At times when we chatted together, M. Zola and myself, and mention was made of his friends —of persons occasionally whom we both knew—

he referred feelingly to the many estrangements caused by the divergence of views on the Dreyfus affair. Friends of twenty and thirty years' standing, men who had laboured side by side often in pursuit of the same ideal, had not only quarrelled and parted but had assailed each other with the greatest virulence in the Press and at public meetings.

Many whom he himself had regarded as close and sincere friends had trodden upon all the past and attacked him abominably, as though he were the veriest scum of the earth. Some in the earlier stages of the affair had hypocritically feigned sympathy, in order to provoke his confidence, and had then turned round to hold him up to execration and ridicule. One or two had behaved so badly that he had refused ever to receive them at his house again.

He spoke to me of an eminent French *littérateur* who at the outset of the agitation on behalf of Dreyfus had immediately promised his help, and had even prepared articles and appeals on behalf of the prisoner of Devil's Island. But this *littérateur* had of recent years been lapsing into mysticism, and at the behests of the reverend

father his confessor, he had abruptly destroyed what he had written, and gone over to the other side to wage desperate warfare upon the cause he had promised to help.

The writer in question (one who will probably leave a name in French literature) was tortured by the everlasting fear that he might go to hell when he died, and he was the more timorous, the more easily influenced by certain persons, as he suffered from a horrible, incurable complaint, and feared that his medical man—a bigoted Romanist—might abandon him to all the pangs of sudden death if he did not comply with the injunctions of the Church.

Then there was a friend of many years' standing, a Minister in successive Cabinets, who feigned that by remaining in office he would be able to favour the cause, and who, instead of that, did his utmost against it. A playwright wrote: 'I am heartily with you, but for God's sake don't say it, for my plays might be hissed.'[1] Another prominent man started on a long journey to avoid

[1] Apropos of the stage, it is a curious circumstance that nine-tenths of 'the profession' in France are ardent Dreyfusards. Nearly every actor and actress and vocalist of note has been on the same side as M. Zola from the outset.

having to express any opinion. Nearly all the baser passions of humanity were made manifest in some degree—treachery, rancour, jealousy, and moral and physical cowardice.

But, of course, there was another and a brighter side to the picture. There were men of high intellect and courage who had not hesitated to state their views and plead for truth and justice, men who, when in office, had been arbitrarily suspended and removed. There were many who had risked their futures, many too who, after years of labour, were well entitled to rest and retirement, yet had come forward with all the ardour of youth to do battle for great principles and save their country from the shame of a cruel crime.

Adversity makes one acquainted with strange bedfellows, and M. Zola was more than once struck by the heterogeneous nature of the Revisionist army. He found men of such varied political and social views banded together for the cause. It all helped to remove sundry old-time prejudices of his.

For instance, he said to me one day: 'I never cared much for the French Protestants; I regarded them as people of narrow minds, fanatics of a

kind, far less tolerant and human than the great mass of the Catholics. But they have behaved splendidly in this battle of ours, and shown themselves to be real men.'

All through the spring M. Zola eagerly followed the inquiry which the Cour de Cassation was conducting, and when M. Ballot-Beaupré was appointed reporter to the Court, there came a fresh spell of anxiety. M. Ballot-Beaupré is a man of natural piety, and the anti-Revisionist newspapers, basing themselves on his religious views, at first made certain that he would show no mercy to the Jew Dreyfus, but would report strongly in favour of the prisoner's guilt. Certain Dreyfusite journals, on the other hand, bitterly attacked the learned judge for his supposed clerical leanings; and indeed so much was insinuated that M. Zola for a short time half believed it possible that M. Ballot-Beaupré might show himself hostile to revision.

When I saw M. Zola he repeatedly expressed to me his feelings of disquietude. Then everything suddenly changed. Certain newspapers discovered that M. Ballot-Beaupré, if pious, was by no means a fanatic, and, further, that he was

a very sound lawyer, much respected by his colleagues. This cleared the atmosphere, for it seemed impossible that any man of rectitude and judgment could pass over the damning revelations which the Cour de Cassation's inquiry, as published in 'Le Figaro,' had produced.

Time went on, and at last the issue, so frequently postponed, so longingly awaited, came in sight. The week before the public proceedings of the Cour de Cassation opened M. Zola said to me: 'I shall have finished the last chapter of "Fécondité" by Saturday or Sunday, so I shall have my hands quite free and be able to give all my attention to what takes place at the Courts. I am hopeful, yes, very hopeful, and yet at moments some horrid doubt will spring up to torture me. But no! you'll see, our cause will gain the day, revision will be granted, and justice will be done.'

And at last came the fateful week which was to prove the accuracy of his surmises.

XV

LAST DAYS—DEPARTURE

I SPENT the afternoon of Saturday, May 27, with M. Zola, and we then spoke of the proceedings impending before the Cour de Cassation. All our information pointed to the conclusion that the Court would give judgment on the Saturday following, and it was decided that M. Zola should return to France a few days afterwards. The date ultimately agreed upon was Tuesday, June 6, and the train selected was that leaving Charing Cross for Folkestone at 2.45 in the afternoon.

Though according to every probability the Court's judgment would be in favour of revision, M. Zola was resolved to return home whatever might be the issue, and such were his feelings on the matter that nothing any friend might have urged would have prevented him from doing so. As a matter of fact one friend did regard the return

as somewhat unwise, and intimated it both by telegram and letter. This compelled me to see M. Zola again on the following Tuesday (May 30), but the objections were overruled by him, and the arrangements which had been planned were adhered to.

M. Zola had now drafted the declaration which he proposed issuing on the morrow of his return home, and this he gave me to read. It was the article 'Justice,' published in 'L'Aurore,' to which I have occasionally referred in the course of the present narrative.

I left M. Zola rather late that Tuesday night in the expectation that everything which had been arranged would follow in due course. As the writing of 'Fécondité' was now finished he had time on his hands, and a part of this he proposed to devote to taking a few final snapshots of Norwood, the Crystal Palace, and surrounding scenery. He needed something to do, for he could not sit hour by hour in his room at the Queen's Hotel anxiously waiting for news of the proceedings at the Paris Palais de Justice.

For my part I had begun to prepare the present narrative, and as he would not listen to my

repeated offers to take him to the Derby, it was arranged that I should not see him again until the end of the week. On Friday, however, reports were already in circulation to the effect that M. Fasquelle (M. Zola's French publisher) had come to London for the purpose of escorting him home.

This was true, and I foresaw that the rumours might lead to some modification of our programme; for M. Zola did not wish his return to have any public character. He had forbidden all the demonstrations which his friends in Paris were anxious to arrange in his honour, declaring that he desired to go back quietly and privately, and then at once place himself at the disposal of the public prosecutor.

On Friday I sent my daughter Violette to Norwood with a parcel of M. Zola's photographs, received by Messrs. Chatto and Windus from Miss Löie Fuller, who being greatly interested in the Clarence Ward of St. Mary's Hospital, particularly wished M. Zola to sign these portraits in order that they might be sold at a bazaar which was to be held for the benefit of the hospital referred to. I told my daughter that I should myself go down

to the Queen's Hotel on the morrow, and she brought me back a message to the effect that I really must go, as complications had arisen, and M. Zola particularly desired to see me.

On the following day, Saturday, I therefore betook myself to Norwood with a parcel of M. Zola's books, which I had received from Messrs. Macmillan & Co. on behalf of the Countess of Bective, who (prompted by the same spirit as Miss Löie Fuller) wished to sell these volumes at the 'Bookland' stall on the occasion of the Charing Cross Hospital Bazaar. And when I arrived I found indeed that it was most desirable that the programme of M. Zola's departure should be modified.

He had already seen M. and Mme. Fasquelle, the former of whom was much annoyed at the reports of his presence in London, and thought it most advisable to precipitate the departure. Delay might, indeed, be harmful if it was desired to avoid demonstrations. Besides, why should he wait until the ensuing Tuesday? Why not return the very next night—that of Sunday, June 4—by the Dover and Calais route? Mme. Fasquelle had declared that she in no way objected to travelling

at night time; and so far as the departure from London was concerned, there would be few people about on a Sunday evening, which was another point to be considered. I cordially assented, for now that the imminence of M. Zola's return to Paris had been reported in the newspapers it was certain that delay meant a possibility of demonstrations both for and against him. In spite of his prohibition, many of his friends still wished to greet him like a conquering hero on his arrival at the Northern Railway Station in Paris. And the other side would unfailingly send out its recruiting agents to assemble a contingent of loafers at two francs per demonstration, who would be duly instructed to yell 'Conspuez,' and 'A bas les juifs.' Then a brawl would inevitably follow.

Now M. Zola (as I have already mentioned) did not wish for a homecoming of that kind. There was no question of refusing to 'face the music,' of shunning a hostile crowd, and so forth. It was purely and simply a matter of dignity and of doing nothing that might lead to a disturbance of the public peace. The triumph of justice was undoubtedly imminent, and it must not be followed by disorder.

When I had expressed my concurrence in the views held by M. Zola and M. Fasquelle, M. Zola and I attended to business. First came the question of Lady Bective's books, in each of which a suitable inscription was inserted. Afterwards, in a friend's birthday book M. Zola inscribed his famous, epoch-making phrase, 'Truth is on the march, and nothing will be able to stop it.' Finally, a few brief notes were written and posted, and work was over.

For a little while we chatted together. Some notable incidents connected with the interminable Affair had occurred during the last few days. Colonel du Paty de Clam, for whose arrest the Revisionist journals had clamoured so long and so pertinaciously, had at last been cast into prison. In M. Zola's estimation, the Colonel's arrest had been merely a question of time ever since the day when one had learnt that he had disguised himself with a false beard and blue glasses when he went to meet the notorious Esterhazy.

'A man may be guilty of any misdeed and may yet find forgiveness and even favour,' M. Zola had then said to me, 'but he must not make himself, his profession, and his cause ridiculous. In France,

as you know, "ridicule kills." The false beard and the blue spectacles, following the veiled lady, are decisive. One need scarcely trouble any further about M. du Paty de Clam. His fate is as good as sealed.'

And now that the Colonel had at last been arrested, the master remarked, 'The military party is throwing him over to us as a kind of sop; it would be delighted to make him the general scapegoat, and thereby save all the other culprits. But it won't do. There are men higher placed than Du Paty who must bear their share of censure and, if need be, punishment.'

Then we spoke of Esterhazy, 'that fine type for a melodrama or a novel of the romantic school,' as M. Zola often remarked. The Commandant had just acknowledged to the 'Times' and the 'Daily Chronicle' that the famous *bordereau* had been penned by him, and we laughed at the remembrance of his squabbles on this subject with the proprietress of another newspaper. How indignantly he had then denied having ever acknowledged the authorship of the *bordereau*, and how complacently he now admitted it! As for the circumstances under which he asserted the docu-

ment to have been written, M. Zola could make nothing of them. 'So far, the explanations explain nothing,' said he; 'take them whichever way you will, there is no sense, no plausibility even, in them. Hitherto I always thought Esterhazy a very shrewd and clever man, but after reading his statements in the "Times" and the "Chronicle" I no longer know what to think. Still, one point is gained; he admits having written the *bordereau*, and others hereafter will tell us the exact circumstances under which he did so. Colonel Sandherr, at whose bidding he says he wrote it, is dead; but others who know a great deal about him are still alive.'

While M. Zola thus expressed himself, we sat face to face, he in his favourite arm chair on one side of the fireplace, and I on the other, in the familiar room, with its three windows overlooking the lively road, while all around curvetted the scrolls and arabesques of the light fawn-tinted wall paper. And after chatting about Du Paty and Esterhazy we gradually lapsed into silence. It was a fateful hour. There were ninety-nine probabilities out of a hundred that the decision of the Cour de Cassation would be given that same afternoon; and whatever that decision might be we felt certain that

before it was made public by any newspaper in London we should be apprised of it. We knew that five minutes after judgment should have been pronounced a telegram would be speeding through the wires to the Queen's Hotel, Norwood.

M. Zola did not tell me his thoughts, yet I could guess them. We can generally guess the thoughts of those we love. But the hours went by and nothing came. How long they were, those judges! Whatever could be the cause of their delay? Surely—trained, practised men that they were, men who had spent their lives in seeking and proclaiming the truth—surely no element of doubt could have penetrated their minds at the final, the supreme moment.

Ah! the waiter entered, and there on his salver lay a buff envelope, within which must surely be the ardently awaited message that would tell us of victory or defeat. M. Zola could scarcely tear that envelope open; his hands trembled violently. And then came an anti-climax. The wire was from M. Fasquelle, who announced that he and his wife were inviting themselves to dinner at Norwood that evening.

It was welcome news, but not the news so

impatiently expected. And, at last, suspense becoming intolerable, I resolved to go out and try to purchase some afternoon newspapers.

There had been rumours to the effect that as each individual judge might preface his decision by a declaration of the reasons which prompted it, the final judgment might after all be postponed until Monday. Both M. Zola and I had thought this improbable; still, there was a possibility of such delay, and perhaps it was on account of a postponement of the kind that the telegram we awaited had not arrived.

I scoured Upper Norwood for afternoon papers. There was, however, nothing to the point at that hour (about five P.M.) in 'The Evening News,' the 'Globe,' the 'Echo,' the 'Star,' the 'Sun,' the three 'Gazettes.' They, like we, were 'waiting for the verdict.' I went as far as the lower level station in the hope of finding some newspaper that might give an inkling of the position, and I found nothing at all. It was extremely warm, and I was somewhat excited. Thus I was perspiring terribly by the time I returned to the hotel, to learn that no telegram had come as yet, that things were still *in statu quo*.

Then all at once the waiter came up again with another buff envelope lying on his plated salver. And this time our anticipations were realised; here at last was the expected news. M. Zola read the telegram, then showed it to me.

It was brief, but sufficient. 'Cheque postponed,' it said; and Zola knew what those words meant. 'Cheque paid' would have signified that not only had revision been granted, but that all the proceedings against Dreyfus were quashed, and that he would not even have to be re-tried by another court-martial. And in a like way 'cheque unpaid' would have meant that revision had been refused by the Court. 'Cheque postponed' implied the granting of revision and a new court-martial.

The phraseology of this telegram, as of previous ones, had long since been arranged. For months many seemingly innocent 'wires' had been full of meaning. There had been no more enigmatical telegrams, as at the time of Henry's arrest and death, but telegrams drafted in accordance with M. Zola's instructions and each word of which was perfectly intelligible to him.

It often happened that the newspaper correspondents 'were not in it.' Things were known

to M. Zola and at times to myself hours—and even days—before there was any mention of them in print. The blundering anti-Dreyfusites have often if not invariably overlooked the fact that their adversaries number men of acumen, skill, and energy. Far from it being true that money has played any *rôle* in the affair, everything has virtually been achieved by brains and courage. In fact, from first to last, the Revisionist agitation, whilst proving that the Truth must always ultimately conquer, has likewise shown the supremacy of true intellect over every other force in the world, whether wealth, or influence, or fanaticism.

But I must return to M. Zola. He now knew all he wished to know. As there had been no postponement of the Court's decision there need be none of his return. A telegram to Paris announcing his departure from London was hastily drafted and I hurried with it to the post-office, meeting on my way M. and Mme. Fasquelle, who were walking towards the Queen's Hotel.

We had a right merry little dinner that evening. We were all in the best of humours. M. Zola's face was radiant. A great victory had been won; and then, too, he was going home!

He recalled the more amusing incidents of his exile; it seemed to him, said he, as if for months and months he had been living in a dream.

And M. Fasquelle broke in with a reminder that M. Zola must be very careful when he reached his house, and must in no wise damage the historic table for which he, Fasquelle, had given such a pile of money at the memorable auction in the Rue de Bruxelles.

Ah, that table! We were in a mood to laugh about anything, and we laughed at the thought of the table; at the thought, too, of all the simple-minded folk who had imagined that they would be able to purchase 'souvenirs' at the auction so abruptly brought to an end.

Then the Fasquelles, having been to the Oaks on the previous day, began to talk of Epsom, and the scene, unique in the whole world, which the famous racecourse presents during Derby week. M. Zola half regretted that he had missed going. 'But I will go everywhere and see everything,' he repeated, 'the next time I come to England. I shall then be able to do so openly, without any playing at hide and seek. Oh, it won't be till after the Paris Exhibition, that is certain; but I

have written an oratorio for which Bruneau has composed the music, and if it is sung in London, as I hope, I shall come over and spend a month going about everywhere. But, of course,' he added, with a twinkle in his eyes, 'I have about two years' imprisonment to do as things stand, so I must make no positive promises.'

The rest is soon told. Final arrangements were made, and we came away, M. and Mme. Fasquelle and myself, about ten o'clock. 'It is your last night of exile,' I said to M. Zola as I pressed his hand, 'and it will soon be over. You must try to sleep well.'

'Sleep!' he replied. 'Oh, there is no sleep for me to-night. From this moment I shall be counting the hours, the very minutes.'

'It will make a change for you, Vizetelly,' said M. Fasquelle, as he, Mme. Fasquelle, and myself walked towards the railway station. 'You will be missing him now.'

This was true. All the routine, all the *alertes*, the meetings, the missions of those eleven months were about to cease abruptly. What had at first seemed to me novel had with time become confirmed habit, and for the first few days

after M. Zola's departure I felt my occupation gone.

That departure took place, as arranged, on Sunday evening, June 4. It was the day when President Loubet was cowardly assailed at a race-meeting by the friends and partisans of the foolish Duke of Orleans; but of all that we remained (*pro tem.*) in blissful ignorance. The Fasquelles went down to Norwood and brought M. Zola to Victoria. I was busy during the day preparing for the 'Westminster Gazette' an English epitome of the declaration which 'L'Aurore' was to publish on the morrow. That work accomplished, I met the others on their arrival in town. Wareham had been warned of the change in the programme on the previous night, and came up from Wimbledon with my wife. There was a hasty scramble of a dinner at a restaurant near Victoria. We were served, I remember, by a very amusing and familiar waiter, who, addressing M. Zola by preference (I wonder if he recognised him?), kept on repeating that he was 'a citizen of the most noble Helvetian Confederation,' and assured us that potatoes for two would be ample, and that chicken for three would be as much as we should care to

eat. 'Take this,' said he, 'it's to-day's. Don't have that, it was cooked yesterday.' And all this made us extremely merry. 'It seems to me more than ever that I am living in a dream,' said M. Zola after a final laugh. 'That waiter has given the finishing touch to my illusion.'

The train started at nine P.M., and we had a full quarter of an hour at our disposal for our leave-takings in the dimly-lighted station. There were few passengers travelling that night, and few loiterers about. We made M. Zola take his seat in a compartment, and stood on guard before it talking to him. Only one gentleman, a short, dapper individual with mutton-chop whiskers (Wareham suggested that he looked like a barrister), paid any attention to the master, and, it may be, recognised him. For the rest, all went well. There were *au revoirs* and handshakes all round, and messages, too, for one and another. And M. Zola would have his little joke. 'If you should come across Esterhazy,' he said to me, 'tell him that I've gone back, and ask him when he's coming.'

'Well,' I replied, 'he will probably want another safe-conduct before answering that question.'

'Do you think that a safe-conduct to take Dreyfus's place would suit him?' was M. Zola's retort.

But the clock was now on the stroke of the hour, the carriage doors were hastily closed, and the signal for departure was given.

'*Au revoir, au revoir!*' A last handshake, and the train started. For another half-minute we could see our dear and illustrious friend at his carriage window waving his arm to us. And then he was gone. The responsibility which had so long rested on Wareham and myself was ended; Émile Zola's exile was virtually over: shortly after five o'clock on the following morning he would once more be in Paris, ready to take his part in the final, crowning act of one of the greatest dramas that the world has ever witnessed. Truth was still marching on, and assuredly nothing would be able to stop it.

THE END

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